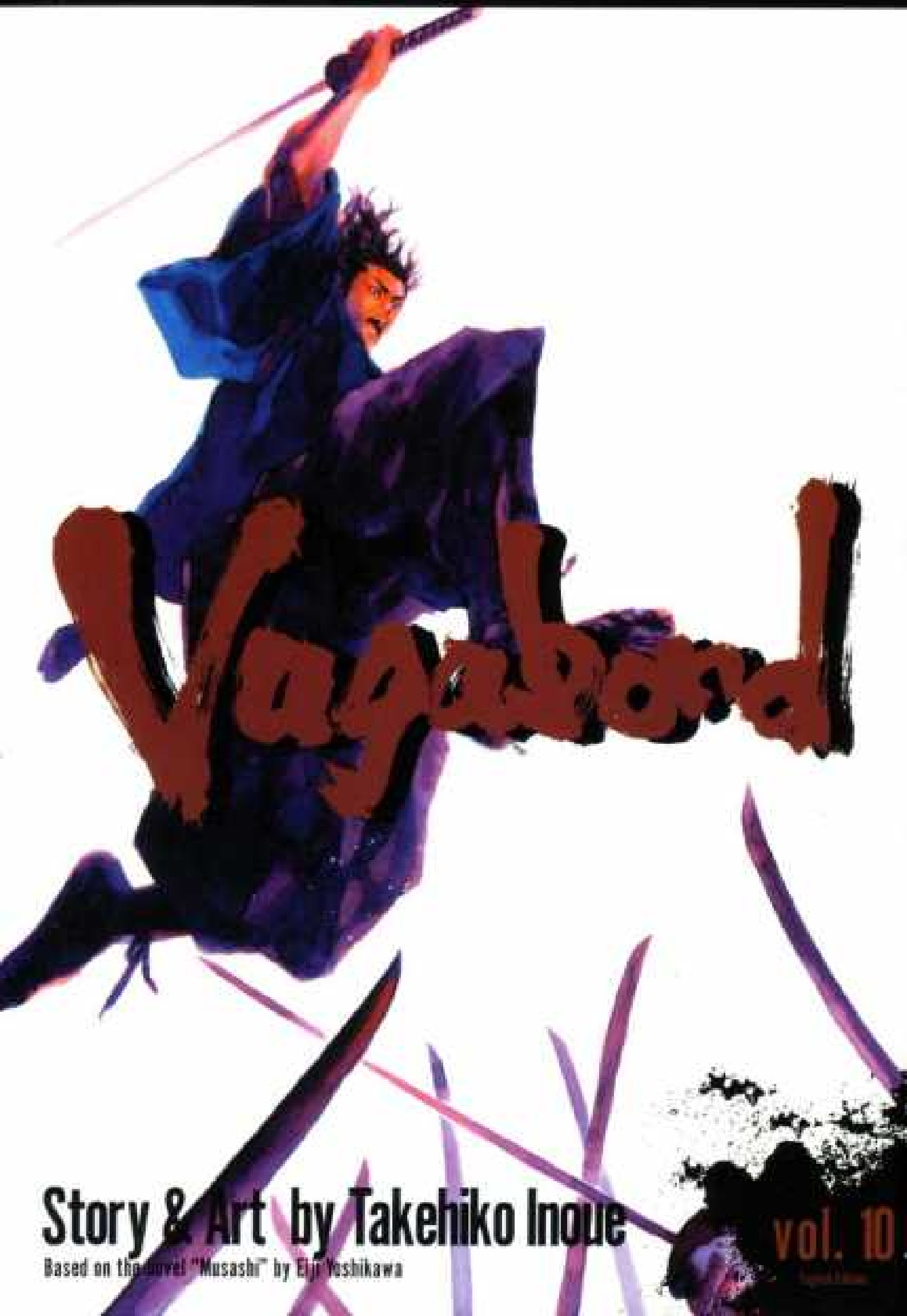
editor's choice



Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue

Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

vol. 10

editor's choice

Vagabond

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English Edition

Vagabond Vol. 10

Story & Art by
Takehiko Inoue
Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

English Adaptation/Yuji Oniki
Touch-up & Lettering/Steve Dutro
Cover & Graphics Design/Izumi Evers
Editor/Andy Nakatani

Managing Editor/Annette Roman
Editor in Chief/Alvin Lu
Production Manager/Noboru Watanabe
Sr. Dir. of Licensing and Acquisitions/Rika Inouye
Vice President of Marketing/Liza Coppola
Sr. Vice President of Editorial/Hyoe Narita
Publisher/Seiji Horibuchi

Vagabond
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Originally published in Japan in 2001 by Kodansha Ltd., Tokyo.
English translation rights arranged with I.T. Planning, Inc.

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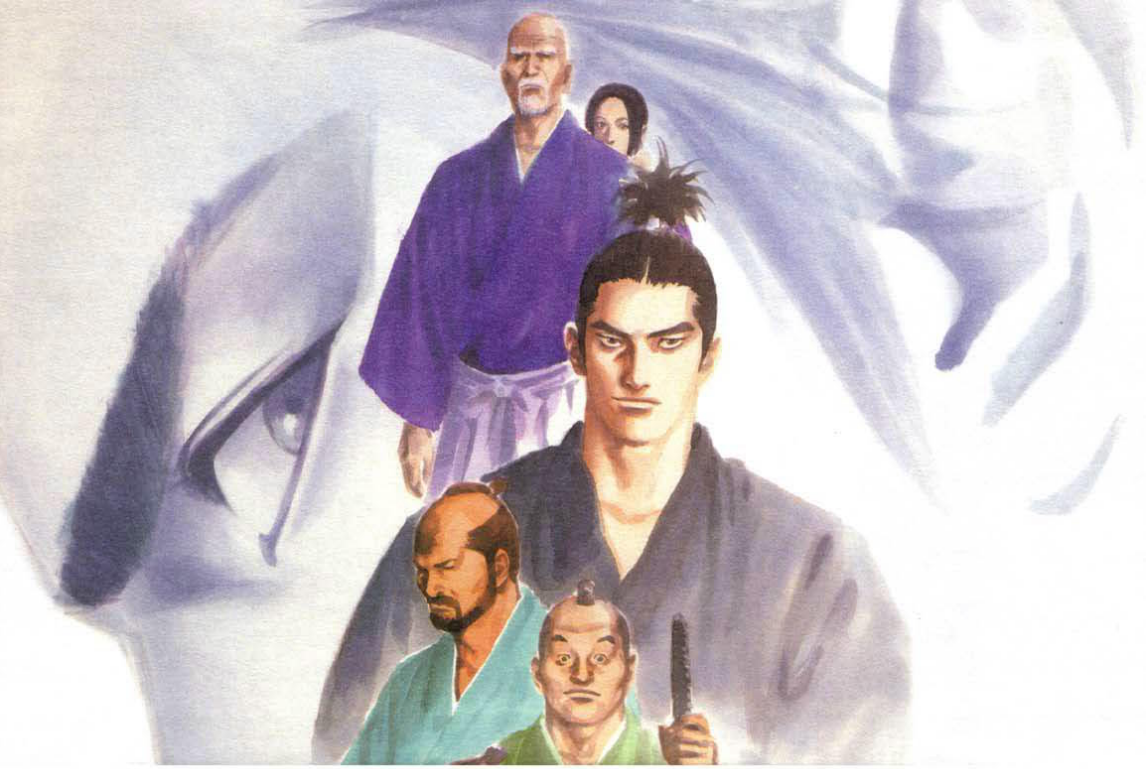
Printed in Canada.

Published by VIZ, LLC
P.O. Box 77010
San Francisco, CA 94107

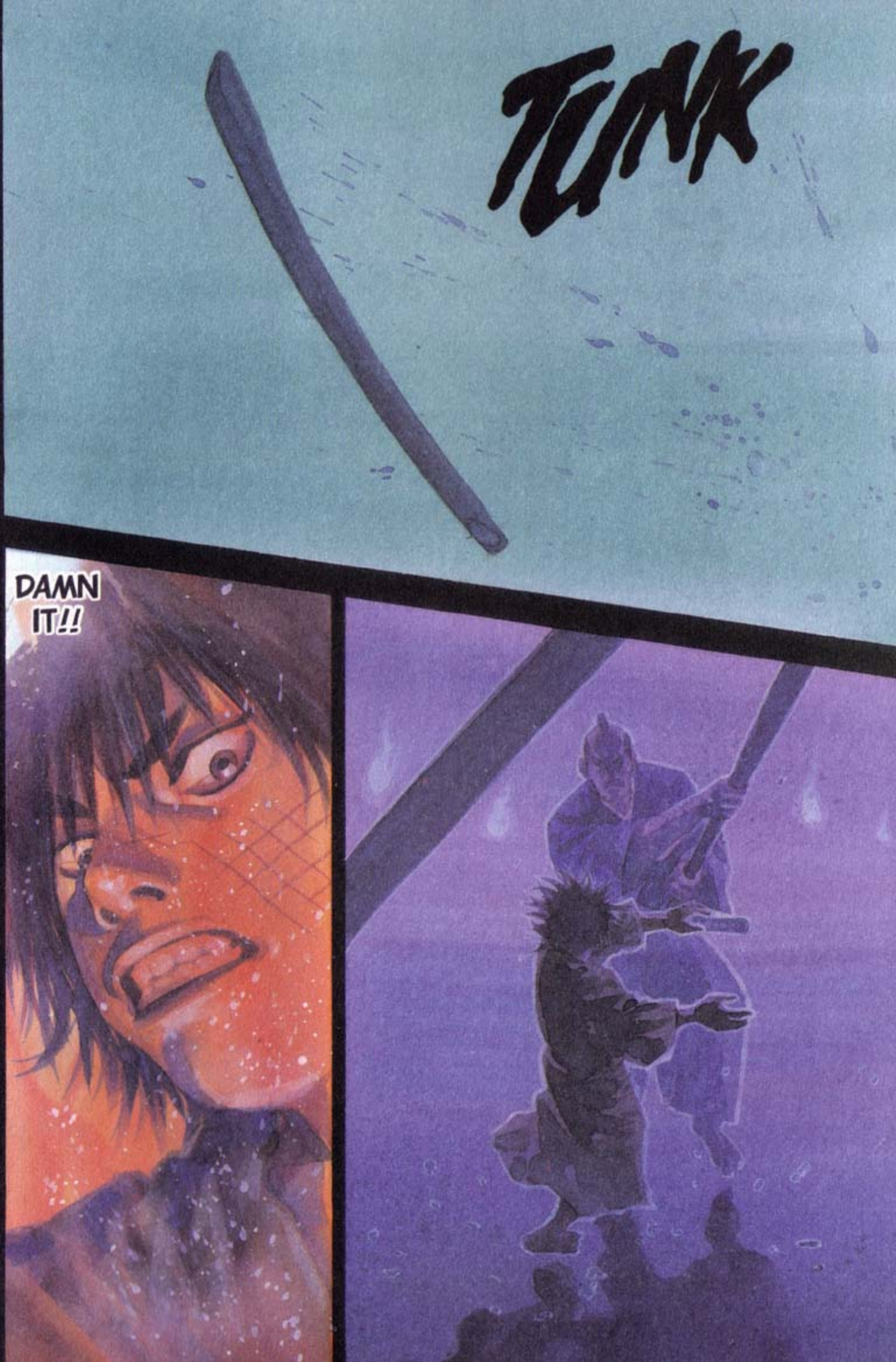
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
First printing, April 2004

*Viz*it www.viz.com, store.viz.com,
www.animerica-mag.com.

DON'T YOU DARE GIVE ME THAT LOOK, YOU BRAT!
LIKE SOME DEMON CHILD!
C'MON, KILL ME!!
KILL ME!!
YOU'RE DEAD, BOY!!
.....



#88 Disciple


TUNK
DAMN IT!!

.....
BARK LIKE A DOG!!
!!
NNGH.

ARRRGH!

I DID NOTHING WRONG!!
IT WAS AN HONORABLE FIGHT!!

GASP!

THWAP
ARRRGH!
THWAP
THWAP

ISN'T THAT RIGHT, DOG?

YOU BASTARD!!
THUNK

NGHH!!

!

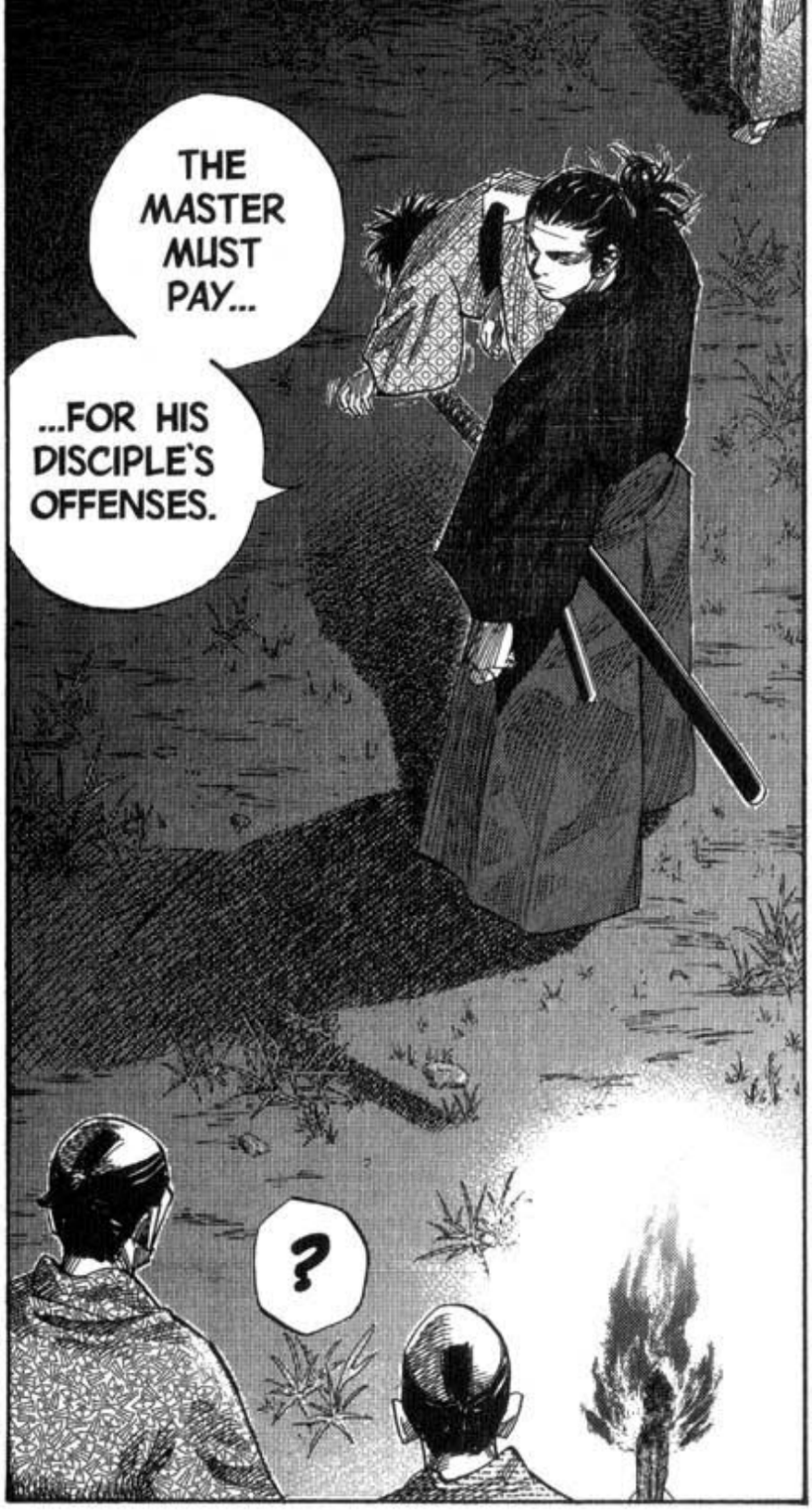
!!

THUMP

MUSASHI
...

!!

ALL OF YOU NEED TO GANG UP ON THE BOY?
FWUMP
...?!
MASTER.
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?!


THE MASTER MUST PAY...
...FOR HIS DISCIPLE'S OFFENSES.
?

GRAB

TUGG
DAMN IT, JŌTA.
YAHH!
NO! I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG.

IT IS SAID THAT...

WE'LL HOLD YOU BOTH RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS OFFENSE!!
THAT SUITS US FINE.
SO *YOU'RE* THIS BRAT'S MASTER.
WHAT?

ALL RIGHT...
WE'LL BOTH FIGHT YOU.

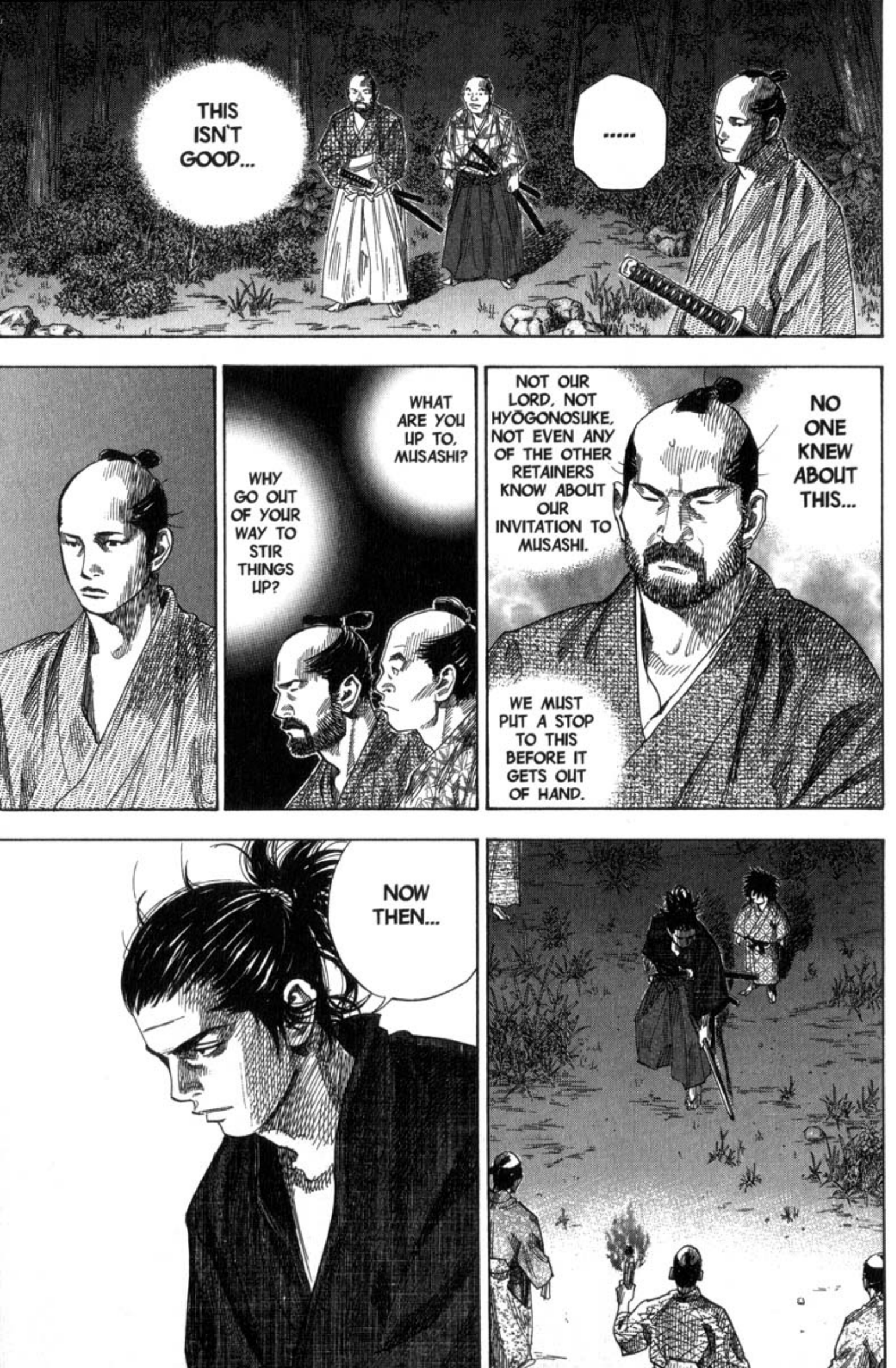
...?!

UMF!!

THWUNK
URRGH!

!!
!!

WHUD
GASP!
MIKIMURA !!
FWIP
DAMN RONIN, WHERE ARE YOU FROM?!
YOU BASTARD...


THIS ISN'T GOOD...
.....
WHAT ARE YOU UP TO, MUSASHI?
WHY GO OUT OF YOUR WAY TO STIR THINGS UP?
NO ONE KNEW ABOUT THIS...
NOT OUR LORD, NOT HYŌGONOSUKE, NOT EVEN ANY OF THE OTHER RETAINERS KNOW ABOUT OUR INVITATION TO MUSASHI.
WE MUST PUT A STOP TO THIS BEFORE IT GETS OUT OF HAND.
NOW THEN...

THE INVINCIBLE YAGYŪ...
LET'S SEE WHAT KIND OF PUNISHMENT YOU HAVE IN MIND.

PUNISH-
MENT?
IN-
CREDIBLE.
HE'S
CHALLENG-
ING US.
THAT'S
NOT THE
ATTITUDE OF
ONE ABOUT
TO FACE A
PUNISHENT.
GO STAY
BY THAT
BIG PINE
TREE.
RUN.
JŌTARŌ...
TMP

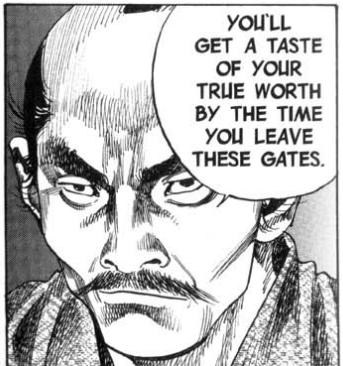
HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN SO ARROGANT?

RONIN...

HUF.
HUF.
HUF.

I KNEW IT. HE'S UP TO SOMETHING.

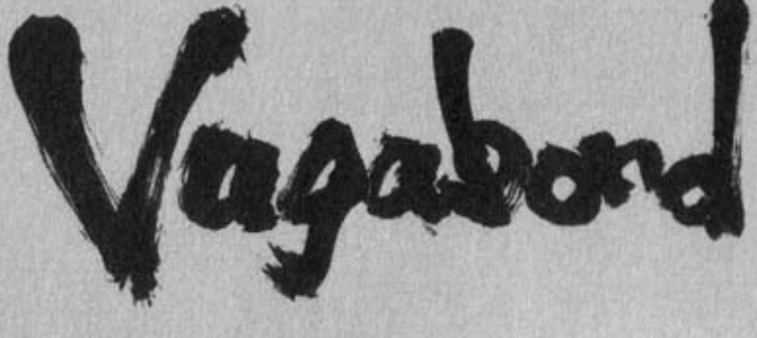
BUT OF COURSE...
YOU'LL BE LEAVING HERE AS A CORPSE.


YOU'LL GET A TASTE OF YOUR TRUE WORTH BY THE TIME YOU LEAVE THESE GATES.

THAT ATTITUDE OF YOURS MIGHT HAVE GOTTEN YOU FAR...
...BUT THE YAGYŪ SCHOOL IS DIFFERENT.

YOUR THREATS ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN OTHERS I'VE HEARD BEFORE.
HMPH.

...!!


Vagabond

(JOTA'S IMPERSONATION OF MUSASHI.)

SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING! I'M BACK WITH MORE SAKE!
MUST STAY CALM...
BREATHE IN.
CONTROL ANGER...
BREATHE OUT.
OKAY...

#89 One Man Battle

DAMN! WHERE'D THEY ALL GO?!

.....
WHO SENT YOU?!
WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
YAHH!!
CUT HIM DOWN!!
FWOOSH
ROGUE!!

!!
NO, WAIT!
FICH
FICH
FICH

NNF!
TUNK
TUGG

!!
THUMP

GASP!

TUNK

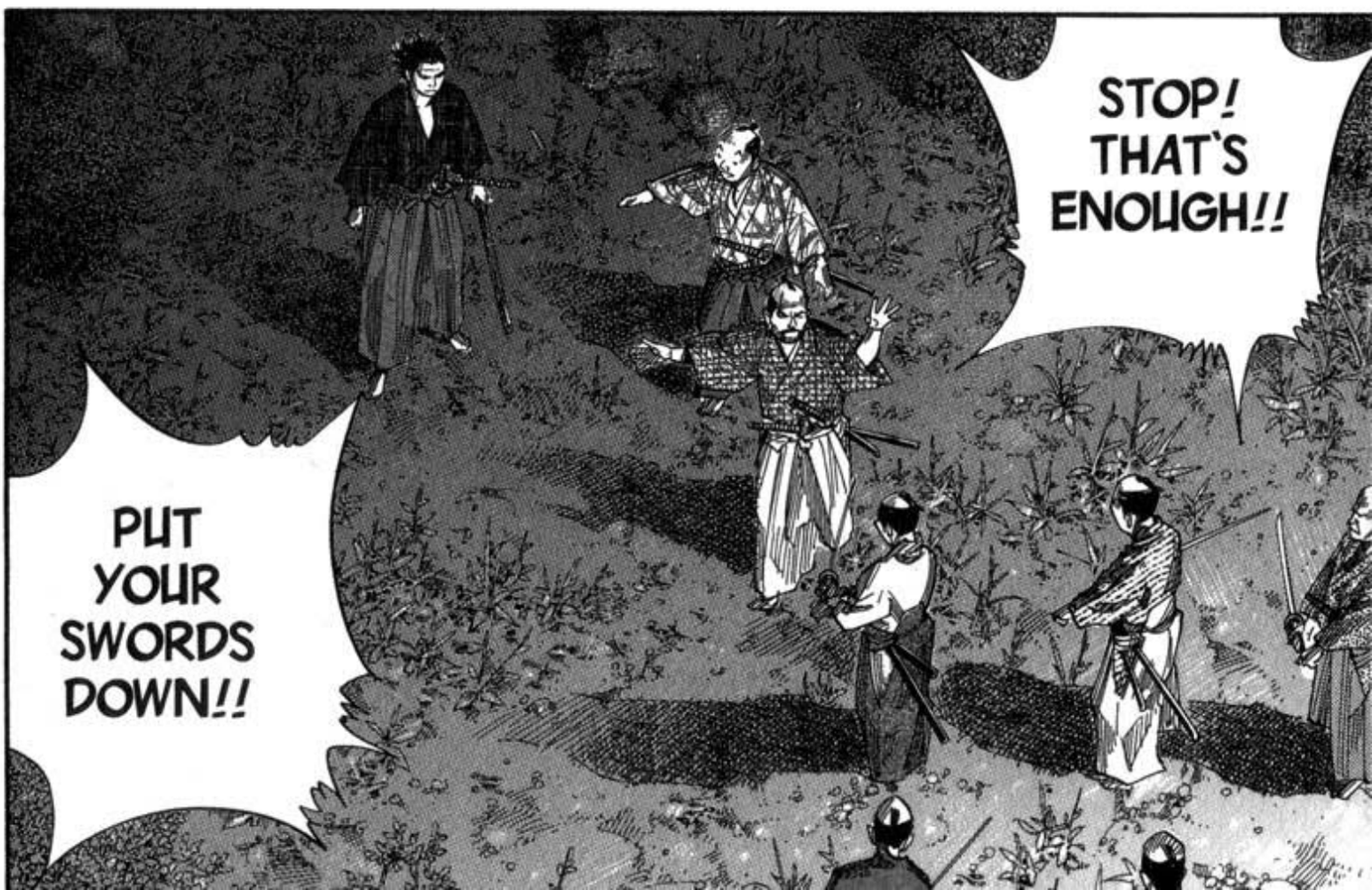
!!
TMP
?!
ARRGGH!

TUMP
!!
URR...
UGH...

ALL RIGHT...
ON WITH THE BATTLE!!
FICH

ENOUGH
!!

?!

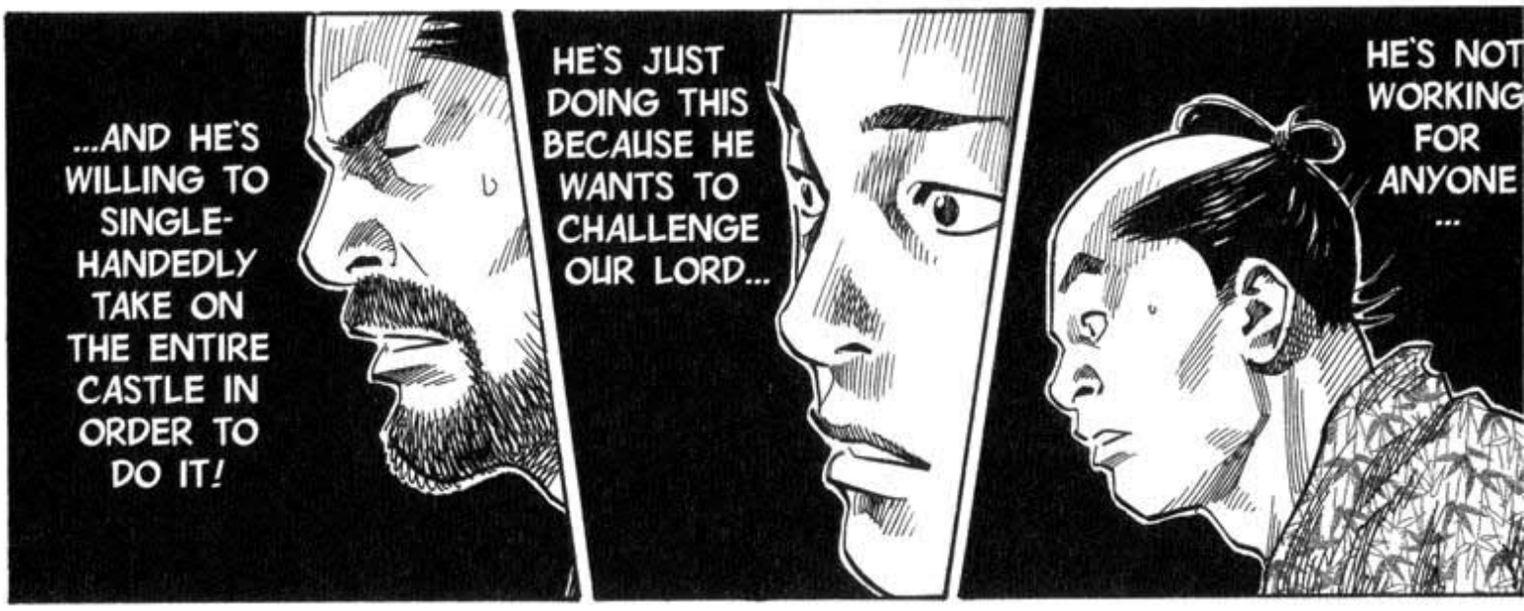

STOP!
THAT'S
ENOUGH!!
PUT
YOUR
SWORDS
DOWN!!

TARŌ IS DEAD AND THE GOOD NAME OF THE YAGYŪ HAS BEEN INSULTED-- YOU CAN'T EXPECT US TO BACK DOWN!!
THE DOG'S DEATH IS INDEED A SERIOUS MATTER, BUT LIVES MUST NOT BE LOST OVER THIS.
SEVERAL MEN HAVE ALREADY BEEN INJURED.
YES, BUT--
WE SHALL TAKE CHARGE OF THIS AFFAIR NOW. RETURN TO YOUR POSTS!!
THIS MAN HAS ULTERIOR MOTIVES.
WE WILL RESOLVE THIS MATTER. PLEASE BACK DOWN.
WE'RE TAKING CHARGE HERE.
OR PERHAPS YOU DO NOT TRUST US TO HANDLE THIS AFFAIR?

THEREFORE, YOU SHALL BE ALLOWED TO COMMIT HARAKIRI.
YOU MAY PROVE YOUR WORTH AS A SAMURAI.

HMPH!

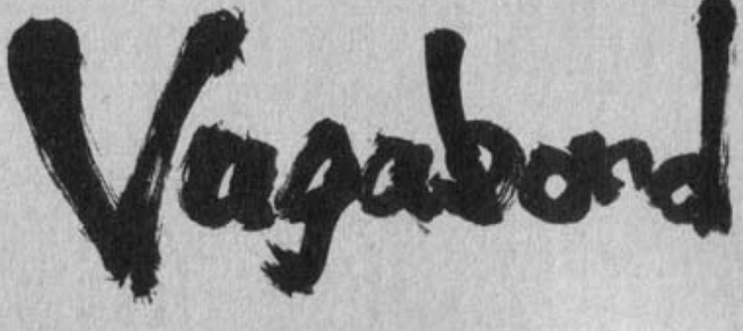
YOU WANT ME TO CUT MY OWN BELLY?
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. THE BATTLE'S JUST BEGUN.
IF SEKISHŪSAI REFUSES TO SEE ME, THEN I HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE...
BATTLE?!
I'LL TAKE ON THE ENTIRE CASTLE!!


...AND HE'S WILLING TO SINGLE-HANDEDLY TAKE ON THE ENTIRE CASTLE IN ORDER TO DO IT!
HE'S JUST DOING THIS BECAUSE HE WANTS TO CHALLENGE OUR LORD...
HE'S NOT WORKING FOR ANYONE ...

WHO WOULD'VE KNOWN THAT FOOLS LIKE THIS WERE STILL AROUND?!

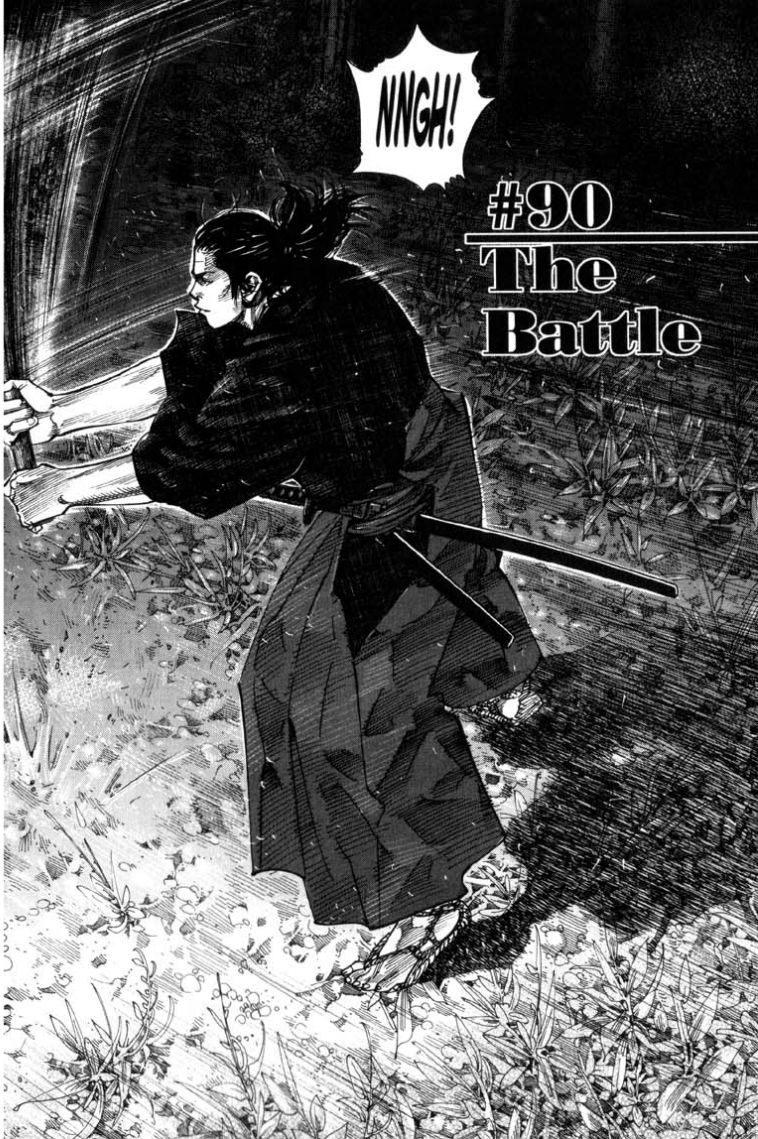
!!
GASP!
FICH
FICH
FICH
!!
AH-HAH, I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.
YOU AND I SPEAK THE SAME LANGUAGE.
FICH
FICH
FICH
FICH
YARRGH!!
HOW DARE YOU LEAVE ME OUT OF THIS?! WHAT'S GOING ON?!
MURATA!!

THWAK
YAHH!!
NNGH!!


Vagabond

(HMPH...)
(FINALLY, A DECENT TASK...)

KRAK
YAH!!

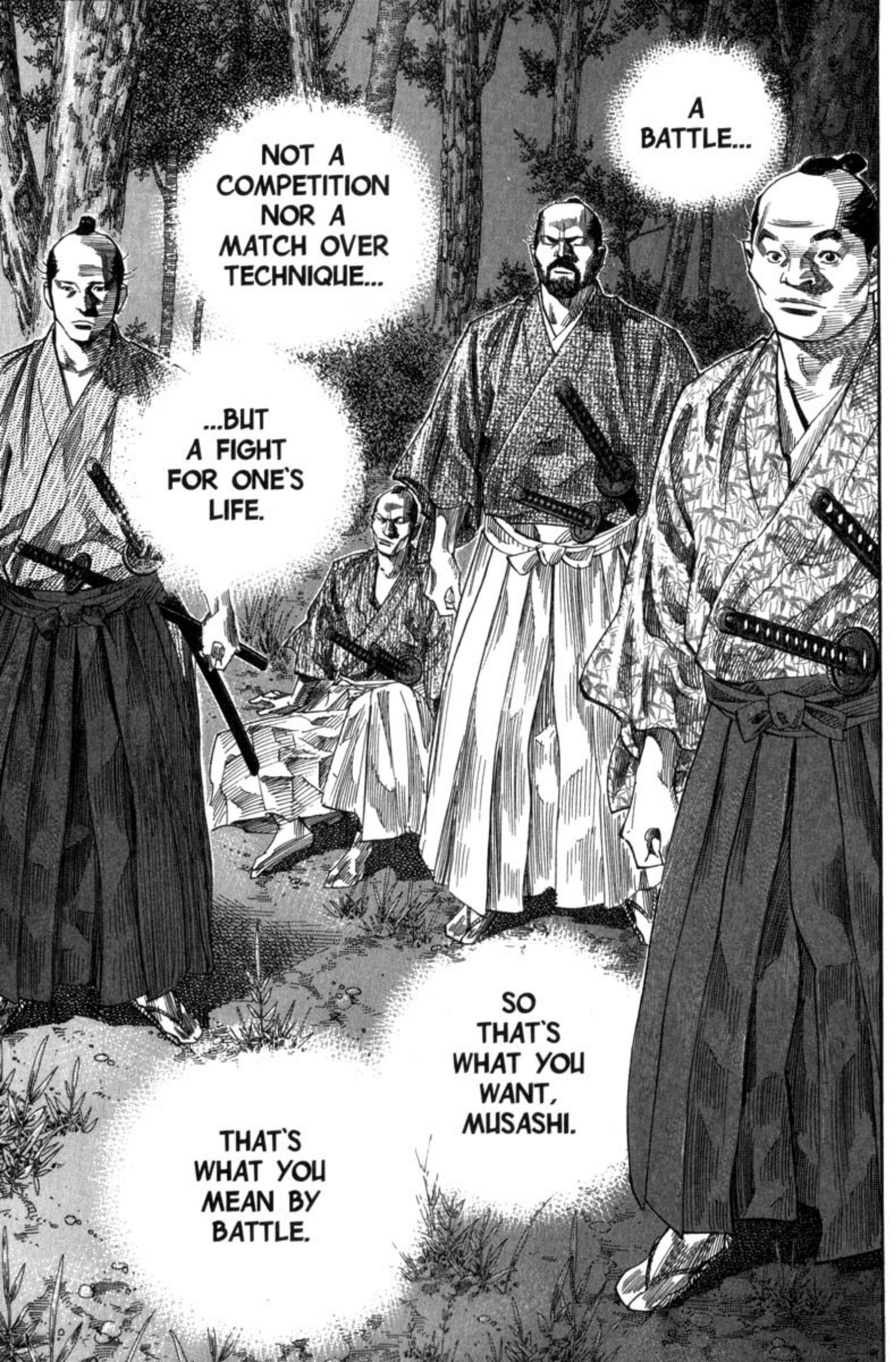


#90 The Battle

TUMP

IT'S AS IF HE'S ON FIRE.

HMPH.


A BATTLE...
NOT A COMPETITION NOR A MATCH OVER TECHNIQUE...
...BUT A FIGHT FOR ONE'S LIFE.
SO THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT, MUSASHI.
THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN BY BATTLE.

VERY INTERESTING...
WE ACCEPT YOUR CHALLENGE.

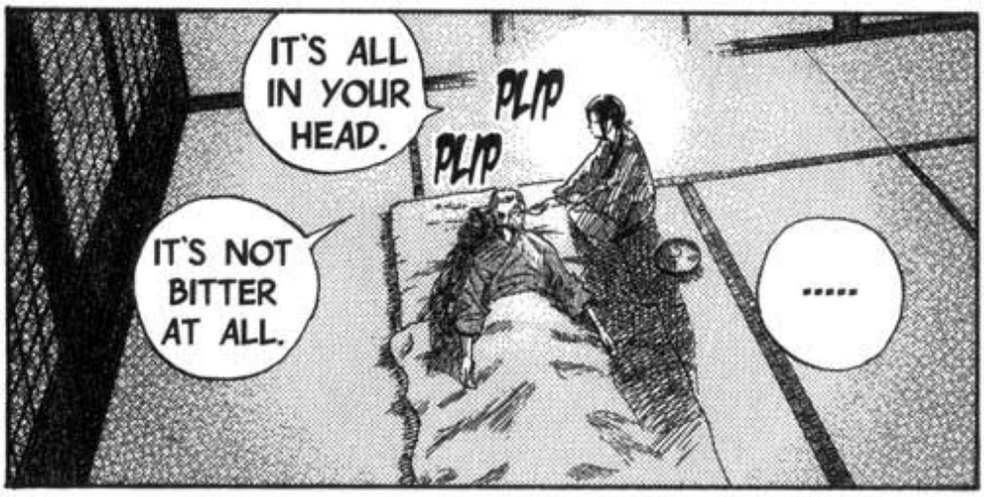
ALL RIGHT.
...NO MORE HOLDING BACK.
FWOOSH

FICH
FICH

THIS ONE'S MINE!!
FWOOSH
YAHH! OUT OF MY WAY!!

FWOOSH
UNTIL I REACH SEKISHŪSAI, I WON'T LOSE, NO MATTER WHO GETS IN MY WAY.

MASTER...


IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD.
PLIP
PLIP
IT'S NOT BITTER AT ALL.
.....

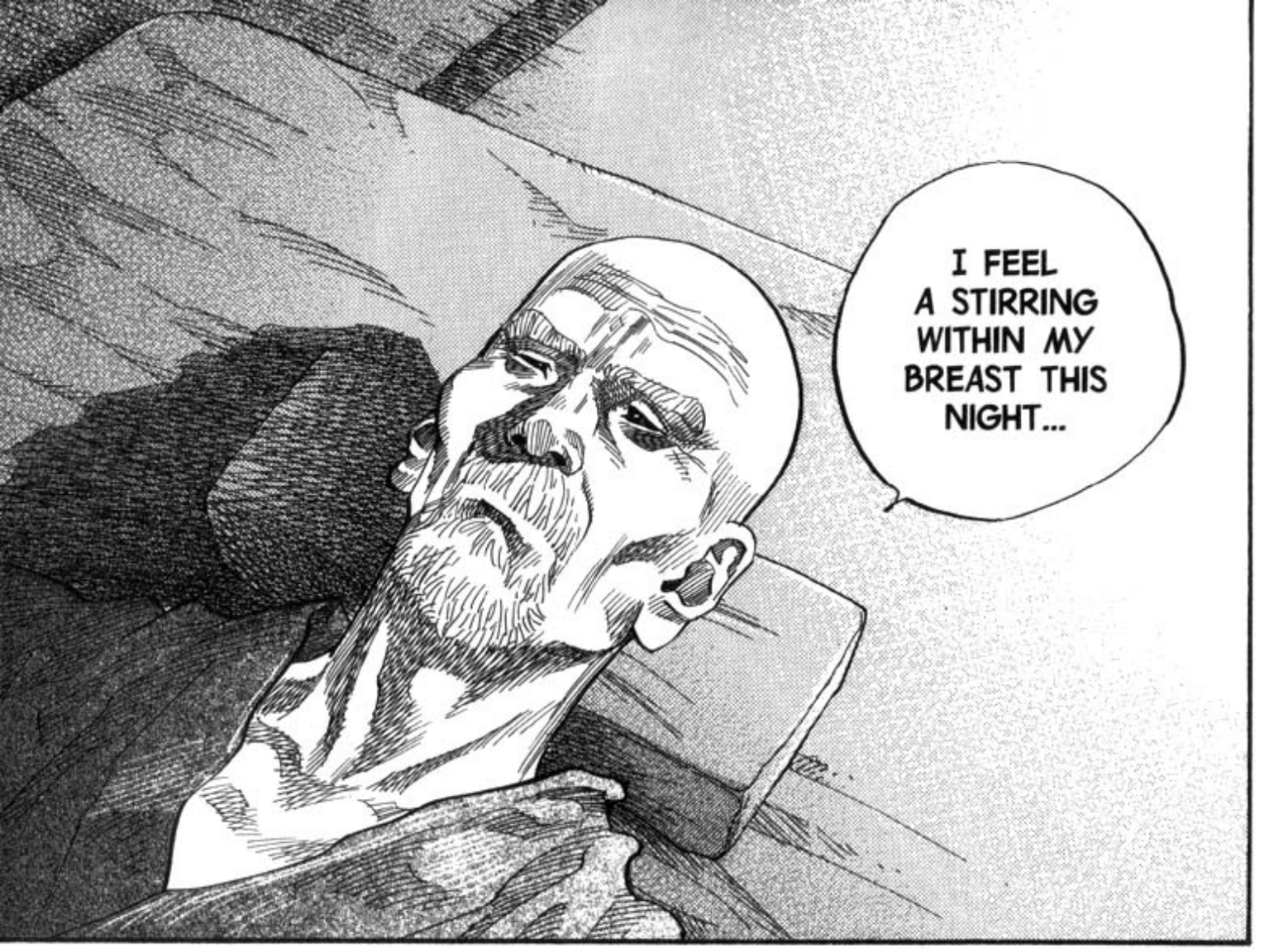
I DON'T WANT IT. IT'S TOO BITTER.
HERE IS YOUR MEDICINE.
IT'S BITTER BECAUSE YOU THINK IT'S BITTER.

WILL YOU OPEN THE DOOR A BIT?

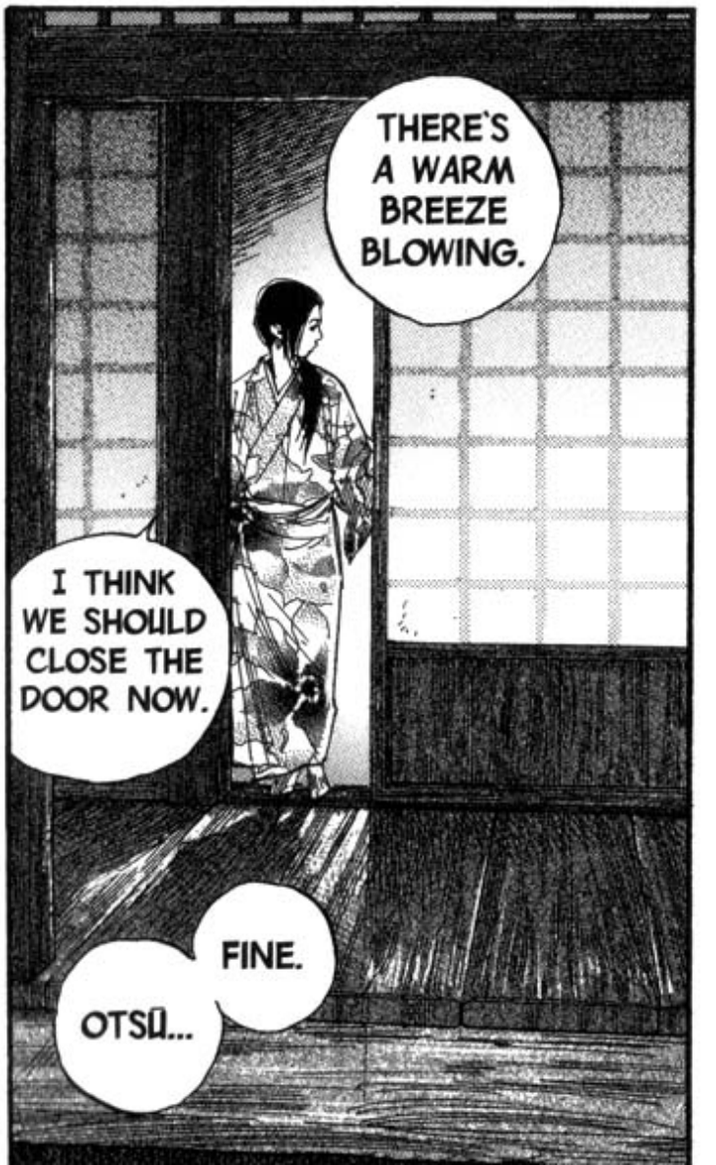
KOFF

HYŌGONOSUKE WILL BE EXTENDING HIS STAY...
...UNTIL YOU'RE BETTER.
I SEE...

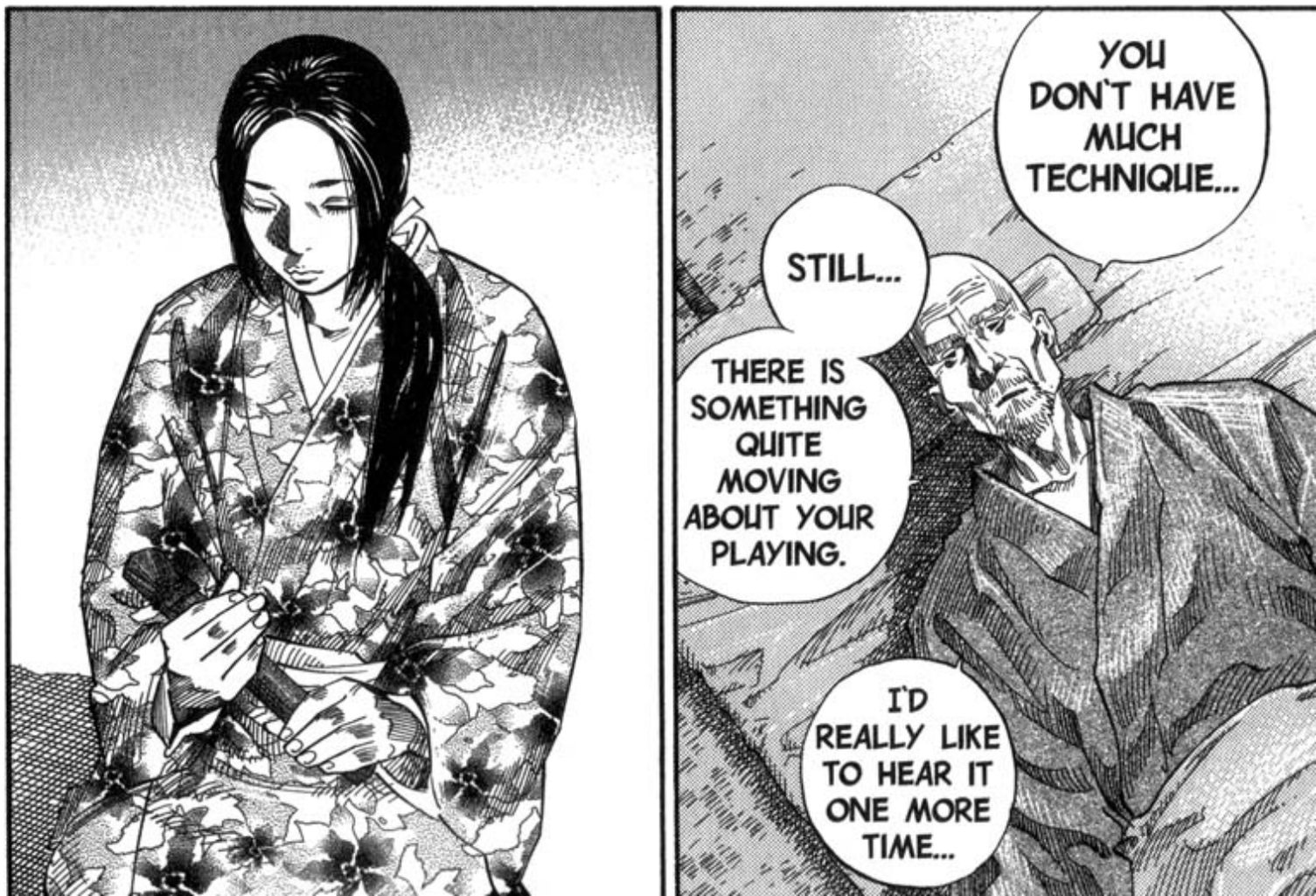
IT'S BITTER BECAUSE IT'S WORKING. IT'S GOOD FOR YOU.
BLECH... IT'S SO BITTER...


I FEEL A STIRRING WITHIN MY BREAST THIS NIGHT...

WILL YOU PLAY THE FLUTE FOR ME...?

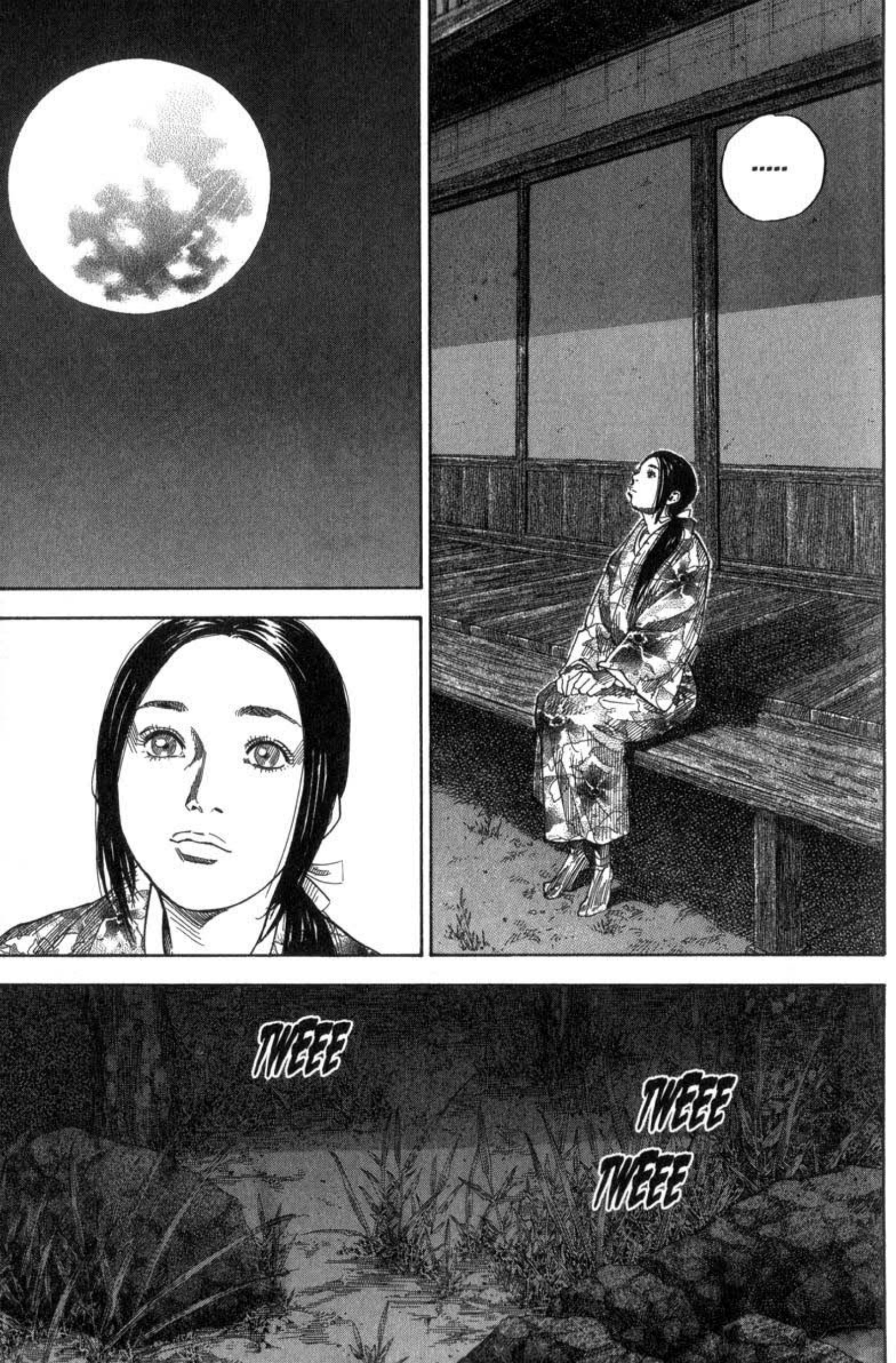

THERE'S A WARM BREEZE BLOWING.
I THINK WE SHOULD CLOSE THE DOOR NOW.
FINE.
OTSŪ...

.....
I ONLY PLAYED IT THAT ONE TIME!
AND THAT WAS ONLY BECAUSE YOU KEPT INSISTING.
OH, COME NOW.
YOU STILL KEEP IT WITH YOU, RIGHT?
YOU OFTEN USED TO PLAY WHEN YOU FIRST CAME HERE...
...THAT BAMBOO FLUTE.


YOU DON'T HAVE MUCH TECHNIQUE...
STILL...
THERE IS SOMETHING QUITE MOVING ABOUT YOUR PLAYING.
I'D REALLY LIKE TO HEAR IT ONE MORE TIME...

THIS FLUTE...
...WHEN I WAS ABANDONED AT SHIPPŌJI TEMPLE IN THE VILLAGE OF MIYAMOTO...
...I WAS FOUND HOLDING IT...
WON'T YOU DO A SMALL FAVOR FOR THIS POOR DECREPIT OLD MAN?
I WON'T.
THAT'S RIGHT, SIR.
YOU HAVE THE FACE OF AN ANGEL, BUT THE HEART OF A DEMON.
A DEMON, I TELL YOU.
BUT LOOK, I KNIT YOU A CAP, SEE?
TO KEEP YOUR HEAD WARM.
AND WHENEVER I PLAY IT, I START TO THINK ABOUT THINGS I USUALLY DO NOT DWELL UPON...
..AND THEN I JUST END UP IN TEARS. THAT'S WHY I DON'T PLAY ANYMORE.
REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED LAST TIME?
NOTHING'S WRONG WITH CRYING.

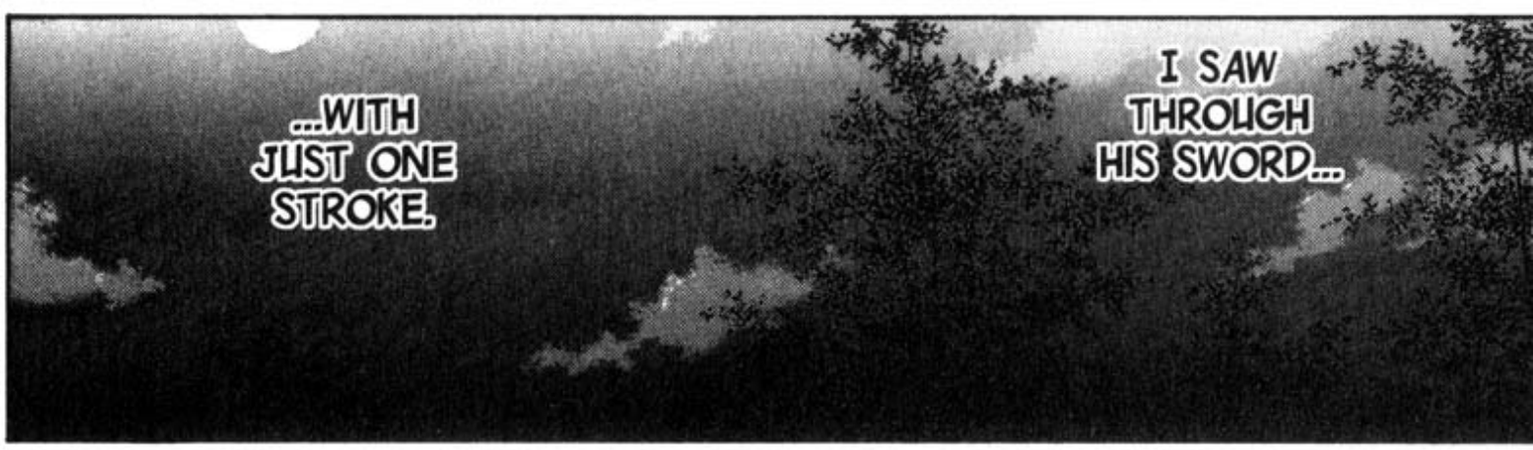
OH, GOOD. IT SUITS YOU...
.....
AFTER ALL, "I DON'T HAVE MUCH TECHNIQUE."
WELL, THEN, GOOD NIGHT, MASTER.
SO YOU WON'T PLAY THE FLUTE FOR ME...?
KOFF
UNGH ...
.....
KOFF


.....
TWEEE
TWEEE
TWEEE

SLISH

Fp
GASP!
I CAN'T EVEN SEE HIS SWORD !!
MASTER!!
OH, NO...
!!
HE DODGED MY ATTACK?!
THIS RONIN ELUDED MY SWORD!
SO THIS IS A SENIOR DISCIPLE OF THE YAGYŪ!!
IMPRESSIVE ...

.....
AN IMPRESSIVE SWORDS-MAN...
WHICH MEANS THE OTHER THREE ARE AT LEAST AS GOOD AS THIS ONE...


I SAW THROUGH HIS SWORD...
...WITH JUST ONE STROKE.

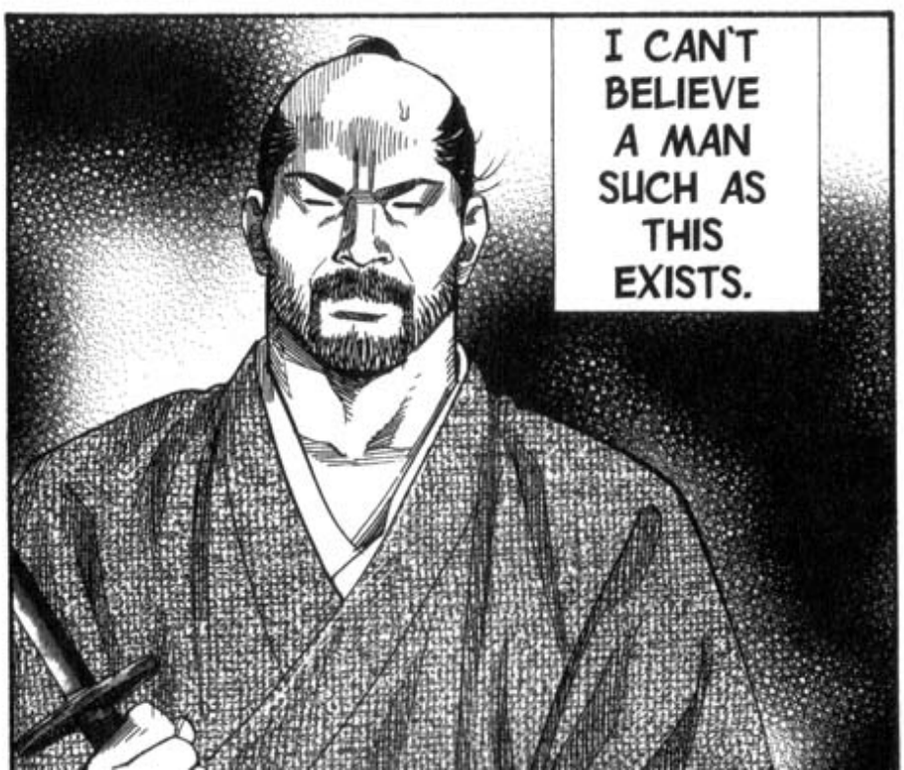
HYUUU
I *HAVE* BECOME STRONGER.

THANK YOU, OLD MAN.

I HAVE FOUR EXPERT SWORDSMEN BEFORE ME...
...BUT I DON'T FEEL I'LL LOSE...

YOU'RE ALL LIVING INSIDE OF ME, AS IF YOU'RE A PART OF ME.
FICH FICH
THANK YOU, INSHUN.
.....
SHUK
SWIP SWIP
STILL...
..IT'S NOT AS IF I'M SURE I'LL WIN...
KRICH
WHAT IS THIS FEELING I HAVE...?

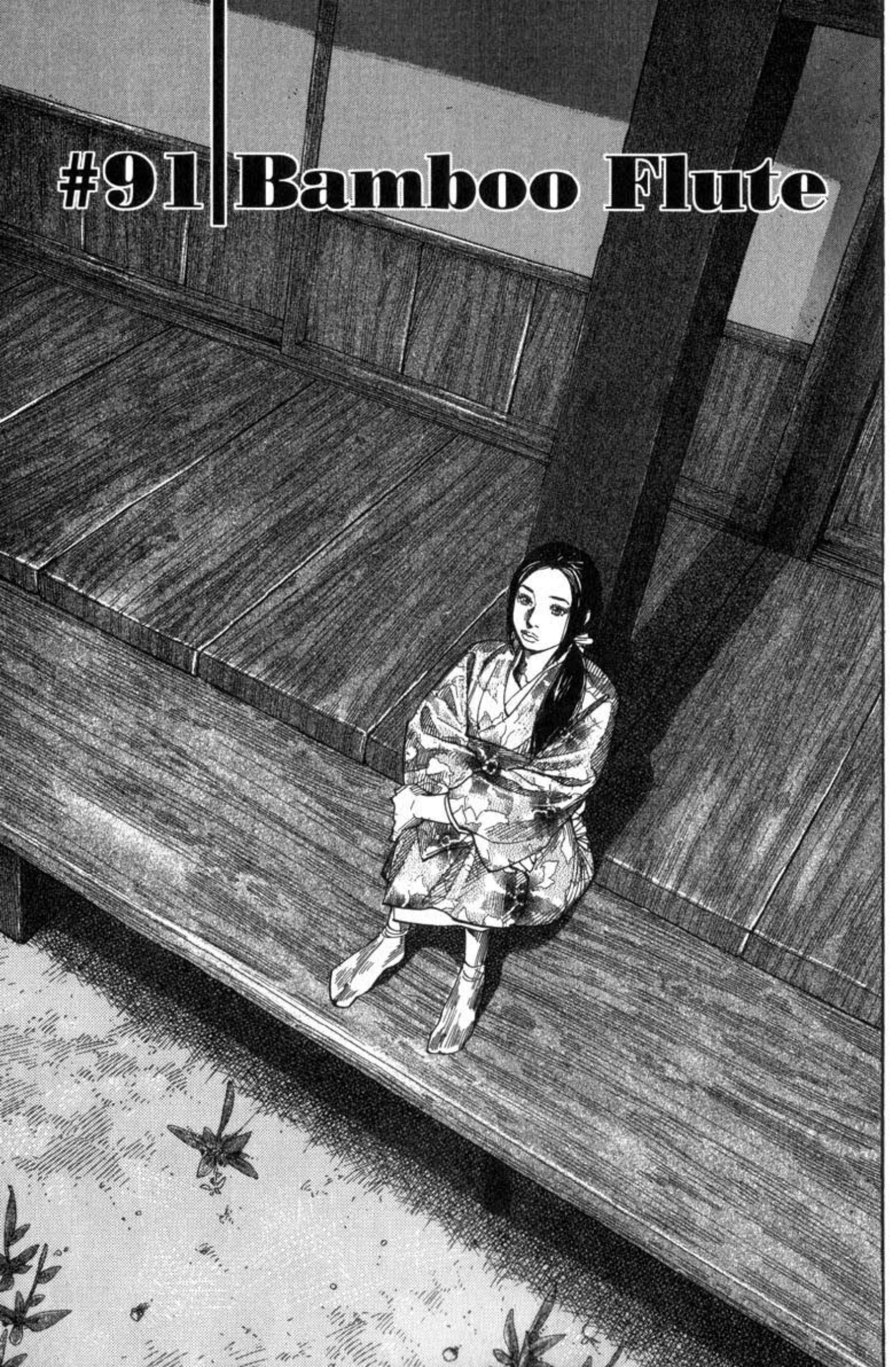
IT WOULD MAKE NO DIFFERENCE EVEN WERE I TO CLOSE MY EYES...


I CAN'T BELIEVE A MAN SUCH AS THIS EXISTS.

...THAT'S HOW IT FEELS.

Vagabond

("DON'T HAVE MUCH TECHNIQUE," HUH?)
(HMPH...)

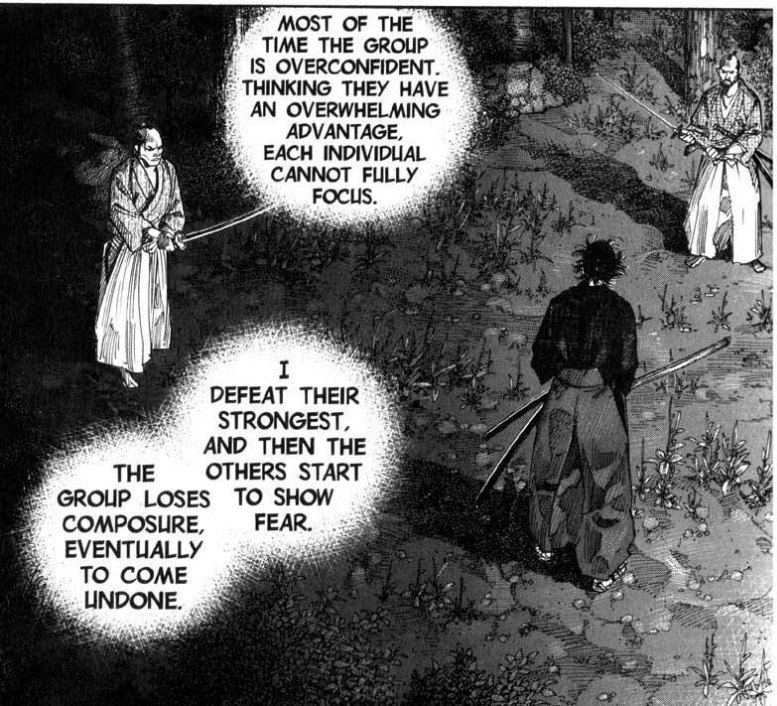

#91 Bamboo Flute

LOOMING YET INTENSE...
A SANGUINARY CALM...
HOW CAN HE BE SO COMPOSED AGAINST THE FOUR OF US?
I CAN'T BELIEVE A MAN SUCH AS THIS TRULY EXISTS.

SWORD AGAINST SWORD...
I WOULD HAVE LIKED A PROPER MATCH AGAINST HIM...
BUT THIS MAN IS DETERMINED TO GET TO OUR LORD. HE MUST BE DEFEATED AT ALL COST...
...NO MATTER HOW COWARDLY IT MAY SEEM.

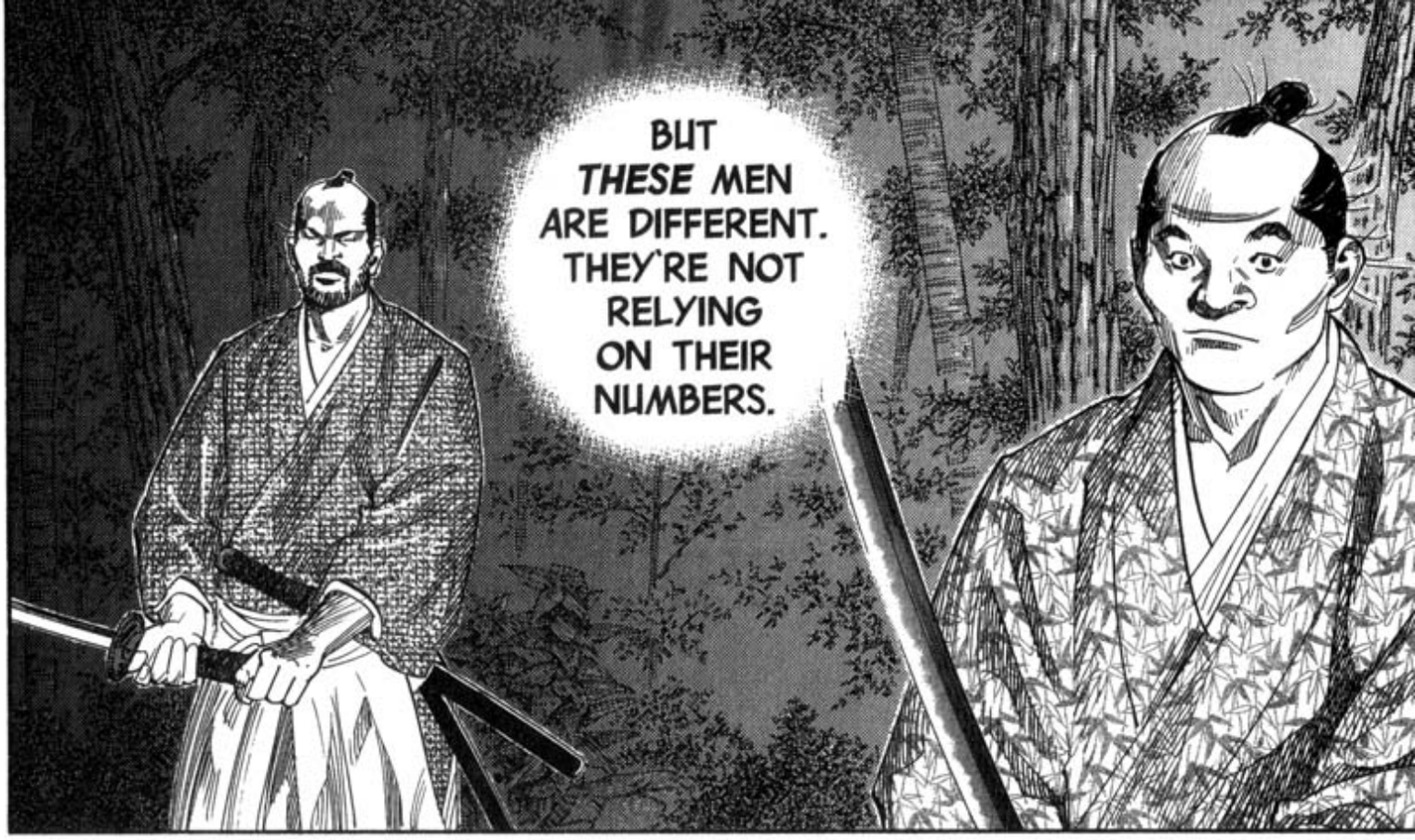
SHUF
FICH

SHUF


MOST OF THE TIME THE GROUP IS OVERCONFIDENT. THINKING THEY HAVE AN OVERWHELMING ADVANTAGE, EACH INDIVIDUAL CANNOT FULLY FOCUS.
I DEFEAT THEIR STRONGEST, AND THEN THE OTHERS START TO SHOW FEAR.
THE GROUP LOSES COMPOSURE, EVENTUALLY TO COME UNDONE.

I'VE BEEN OUTNUMBERED MANY TIMES BEFORE.

FOUR AGAINST ONE...


BUT *THESE* MEN ARE DIFFERENT. THEY'RE NOT RELYING ON THEIR NUMBERS.

EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM.
THEY ARE COMPLETELY FOCUSED.

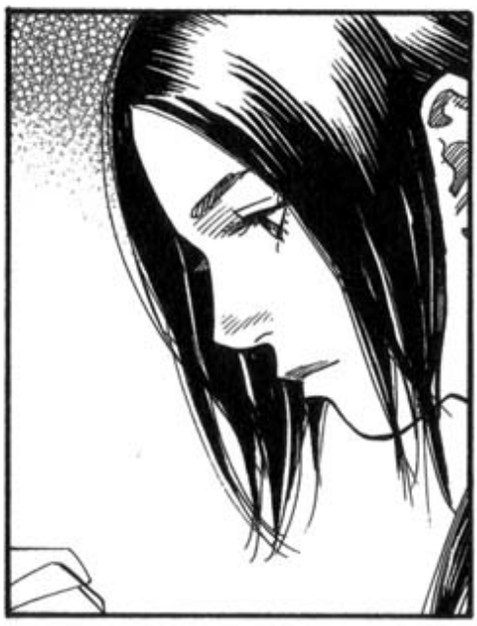
THEY ARE INDEED THE SENIOR DISCIPLES OF THE YAGYŪ.

THIS CASTLE WON'T EASILY FALL.
FICH
FICH

HUF.
HUF.
HM.
HUF.
HUF.
HM.
HUF.
HUF.
HM.
HUF.
ALL FOUR OF THEM.
I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING...
HUF.
HUF.
THIS ISN'T GOOD...
HUF.

THESE MEN HAVE EXCEPTIONAL SKILL...
OTSŪ!!
SHUF
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.

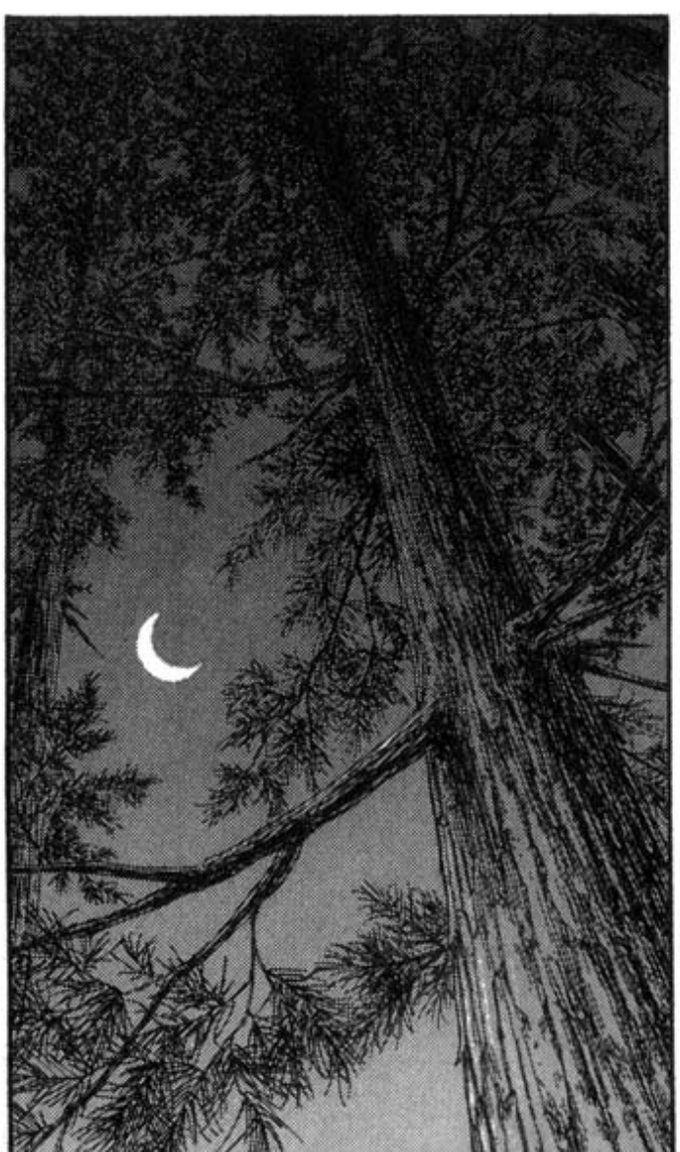
KCHK
!!



IF YOU GO OFF TO SUCH A HUGE BATTLE...
...WHEN COULD YOU POSSIBLY COME BACK?
I'VE GOT NO IDEA!
TOMORROW'S OUR BIG DAY. WE'RE OFF TO GO OUT INTO THE WORLD TO FULFILL OUR AMBITION!!
STOP YOUR SULKING, OTSŪ!!
I'LL BE SO IMPRESSIVE IN BATTLE THAT I'LL ESTABLISH MYSELF AS THE MIGHTY HON'IDEN MATAHACHI OF MIYAMOTO VILLAGE!!
RIGHT...
WE'RE GOING TO MAKE NAMES FOR OURSELVES !!
RIGHT, TAKEZŌ?!

I WANT TO HEAR YOUR FLUTE.
WHAT ?

.....

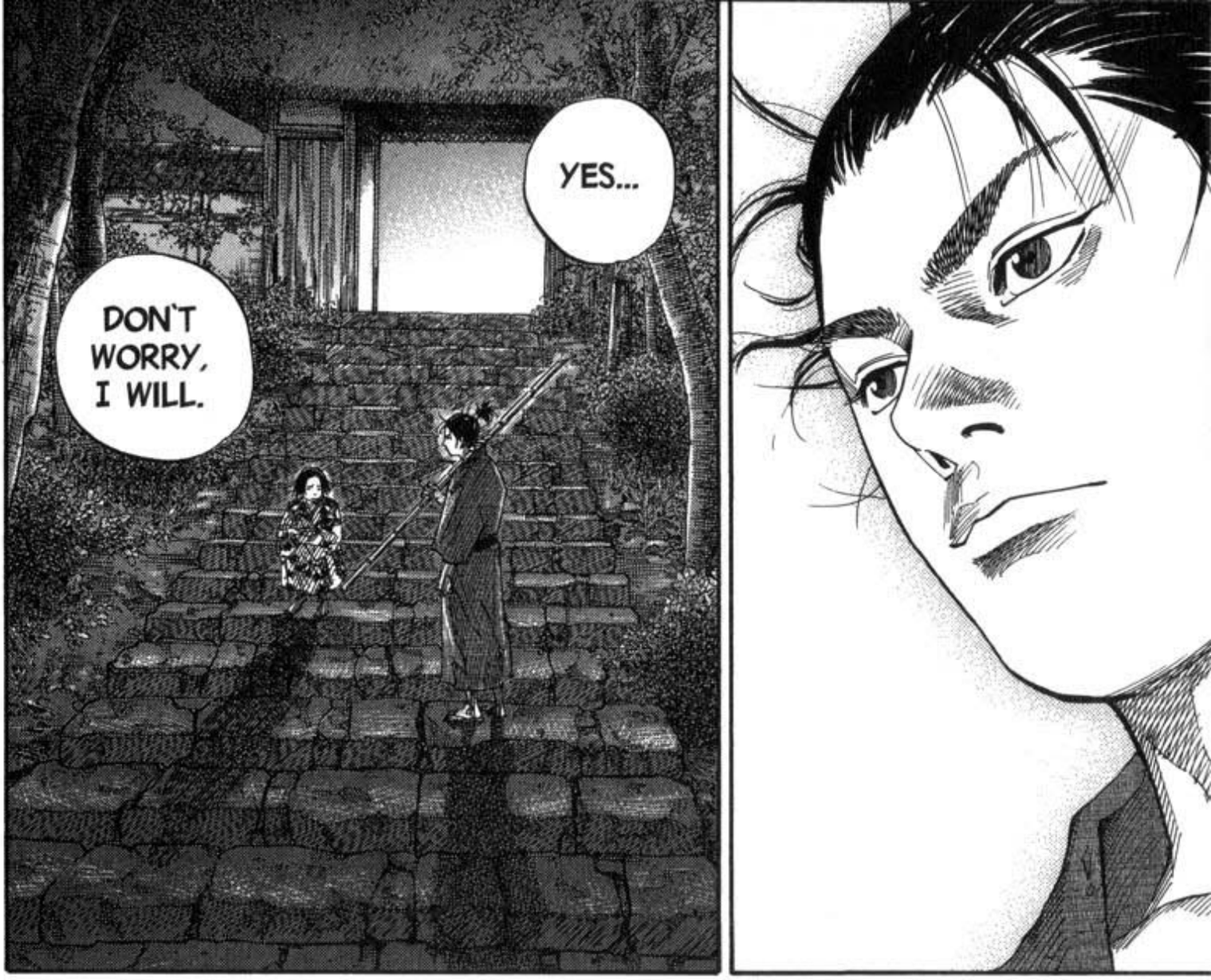


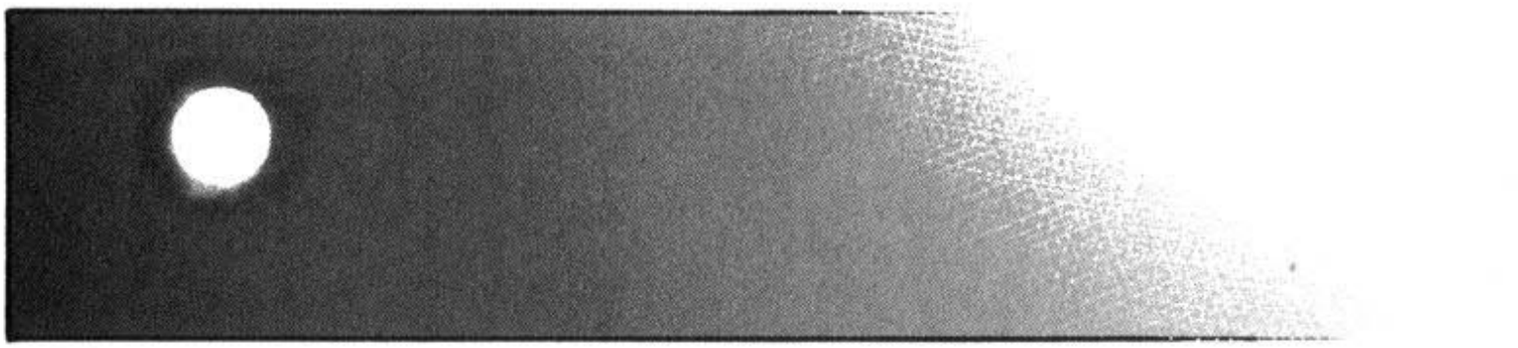
WHEN WE WERE KIDS, I USED TO HEAR YOU PLAYING HERE AT SHIPPŌJI TEMPLE.
YOU USED TO GO OFF ON YOUR OWN AND PLAY...

PLEASE, I WANT TO HEAR YOUR FLUTE SO I CAN REMEMBER YOU WHEN I'M OUT ON THE BATTLEFIELD...
THIS DECISIVE BATTLE WILL DETERMINE WHO RULES THIS COUNTRY...IT'LL BE A WHILE BEFORE WE RETURN.

MATA-
HACHI!
TMP
TMP

I WANT TO GO WITH YOU GUYS...
.....
ARE YOU REALLY COMING BACK?
SNIFF
TAKEZŌ...
WE'LL BE BACK.
DON'T BE STUPID.
YOU'LL HELP MATAHACHI WHEN HE'S IN DANGER, WON'T YOU?


YES...
DON'T WORRY, I WILL.



TAKEZŌ...

FICH
FICH

A FATAL MISTAKE, MUSASHI!!
FICH
TWO SWORDS OUT OF DESPERATION...
A ONE-HANDED SWORD CAN CUT THROUGH FLESH, BUT NOT THROUGH TO THE BONE!!
!

Vagabond

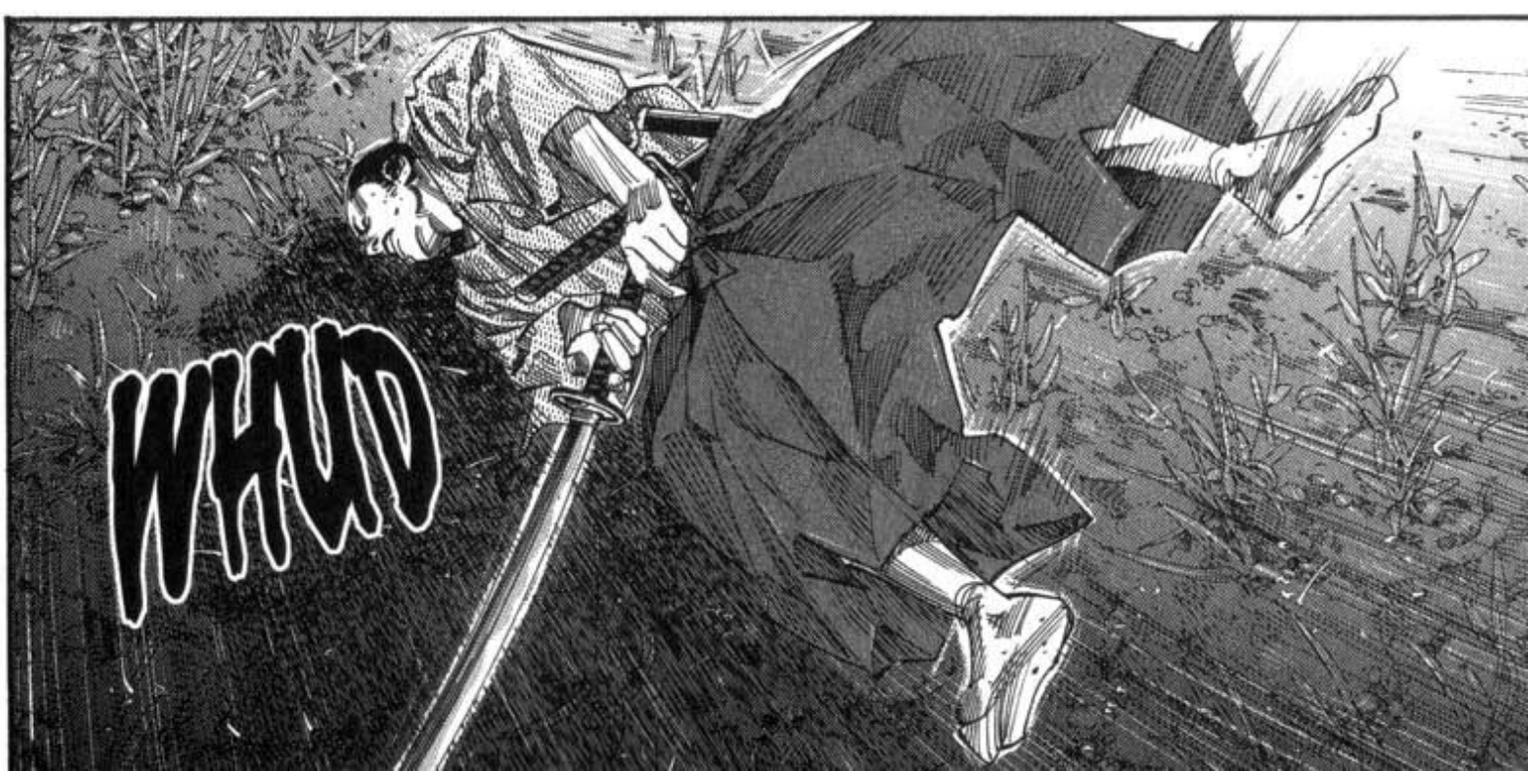
(RUN AWAY.)

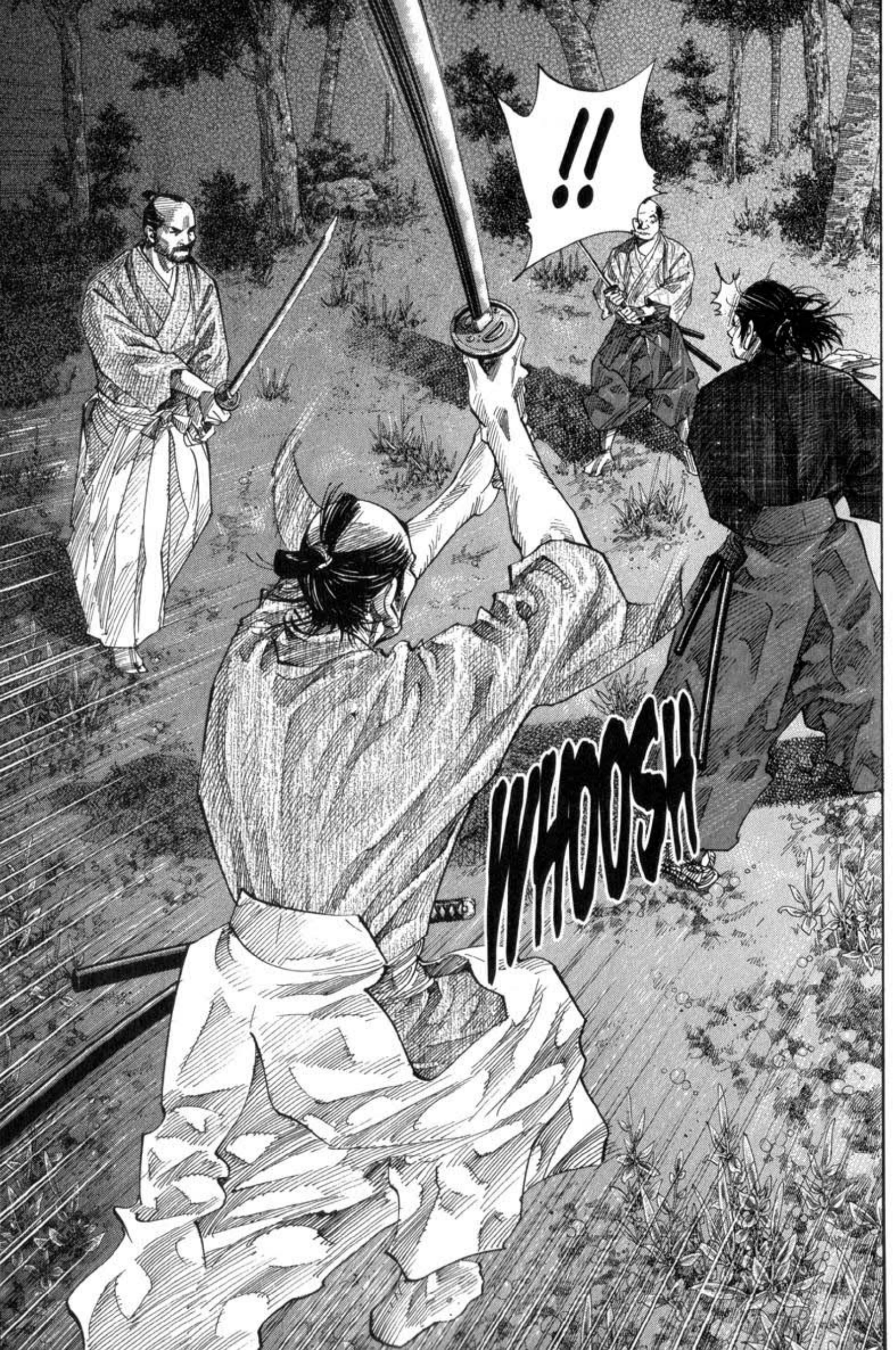
#92
The Four Senior Disciples

FWOOSH
!!
FWISH
NNGH!

KRAK

URGH!


WHUD


!!
WHOOSH

ZWOOSH
FWOOM
!!

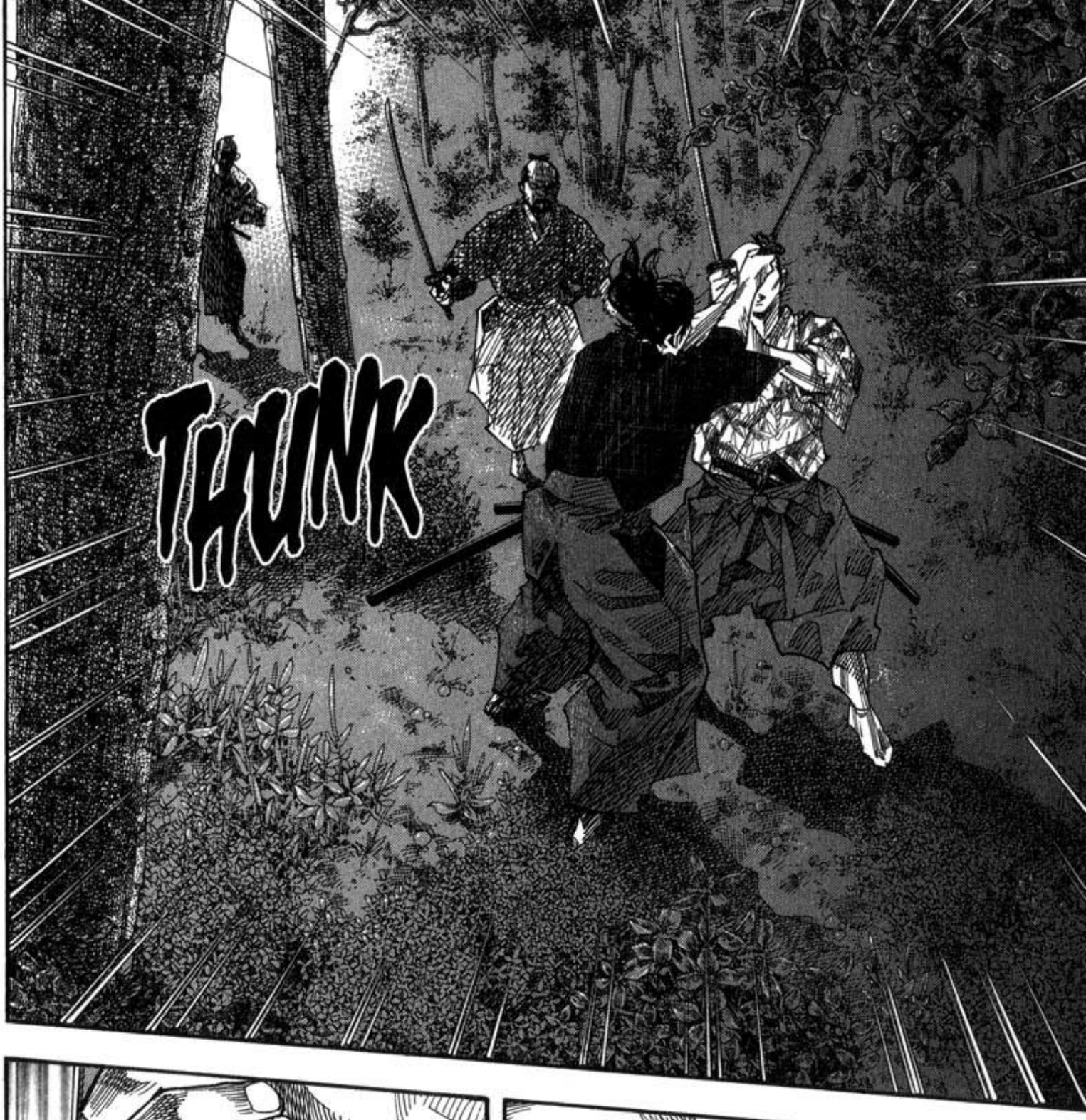
FICH
MY EAR...!!
FICH
FWOOSH

HMPH !!
FICH
FICH
FICH

HRM!

TUNK
YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY!!
FICH
!!
THWIZ
TUGG

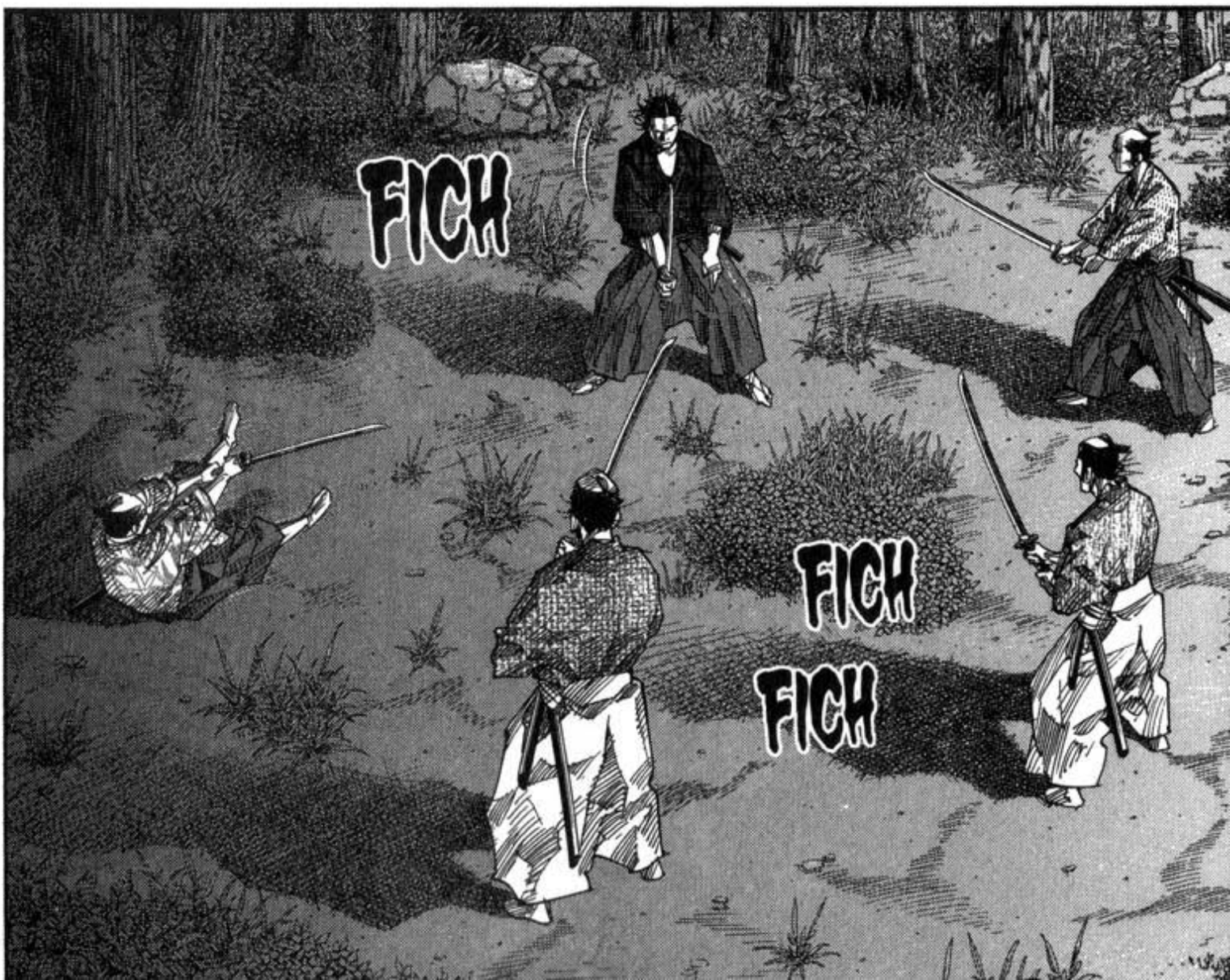
SHUNK
!!
SMIRK
SMIRK


THUNK

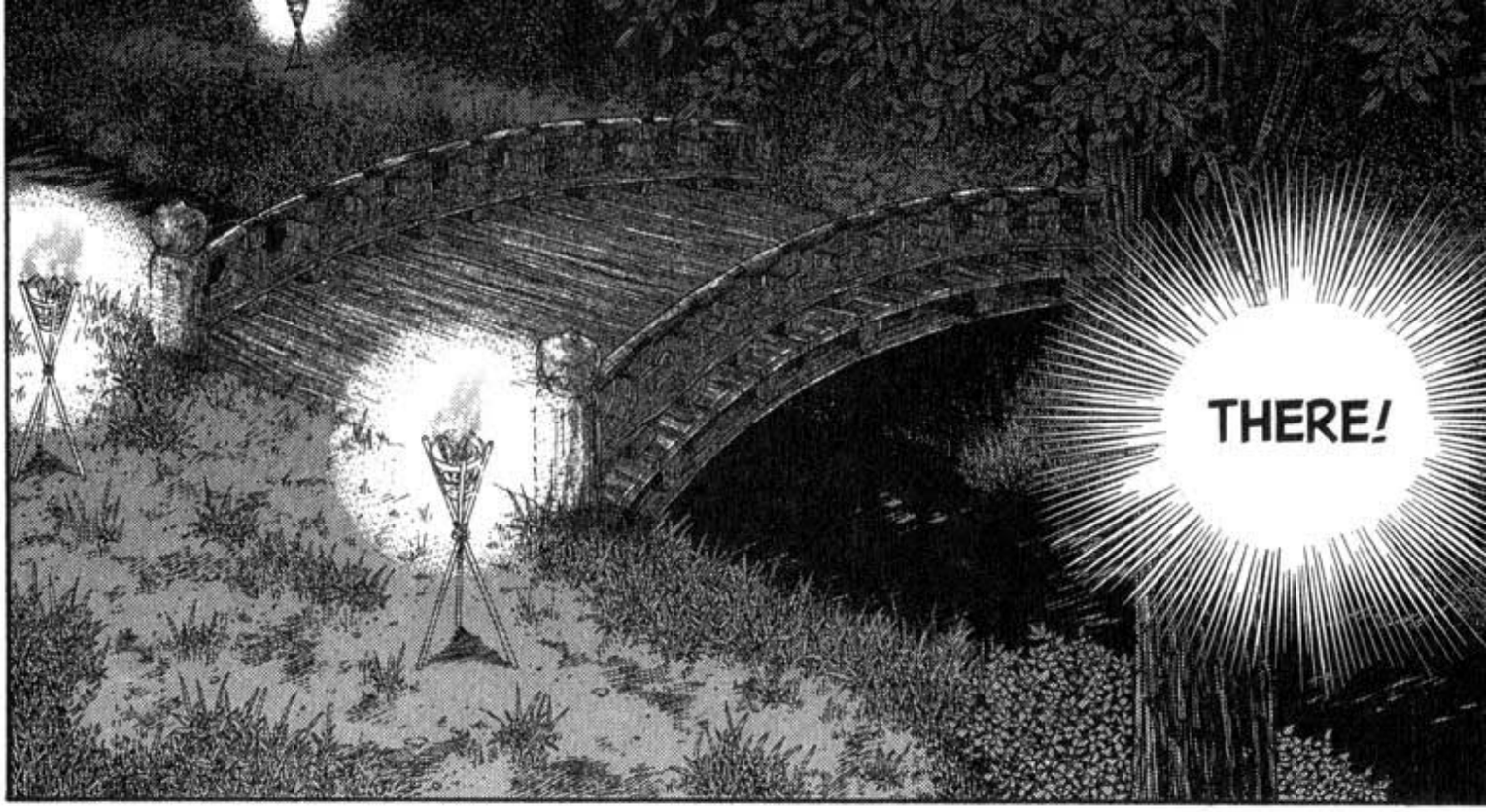
TUGG

KRAK
!!

WHUDD


FICH
FICH
FICH

HUF.
KRAK
NNGH!
HUF.
HUF.
WHAT'S THIS?!
HUF.
FICH
!!
FICH
HAVE TO FIGHT THEM ONE BY ONE.
HUF.
HUF.
CAN'T LET THEM SUR-ROUND ME.
HUF.
.....

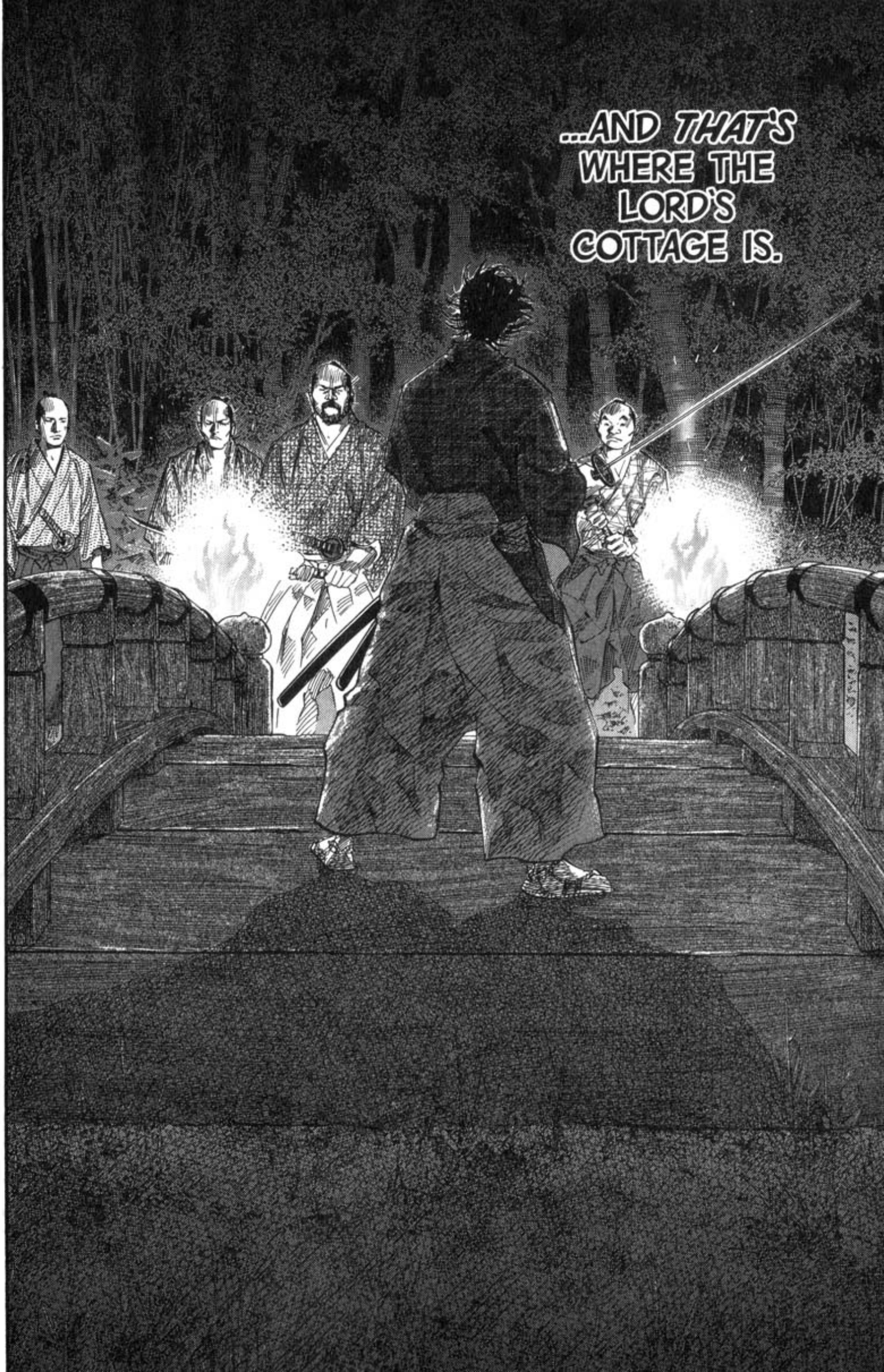

THERE!

HUF.
FICH
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.

HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
HM.
HUF.
HEH HEH...
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
WHO WANTS TO BE FIRST?

NO, THAT WILL GIVE HIM TIME TO MOVE BACK BEYOND THE BRIDGE...
SHOULD WE CROSS THE STREAM TO CIRCLE IN ON HIM...?

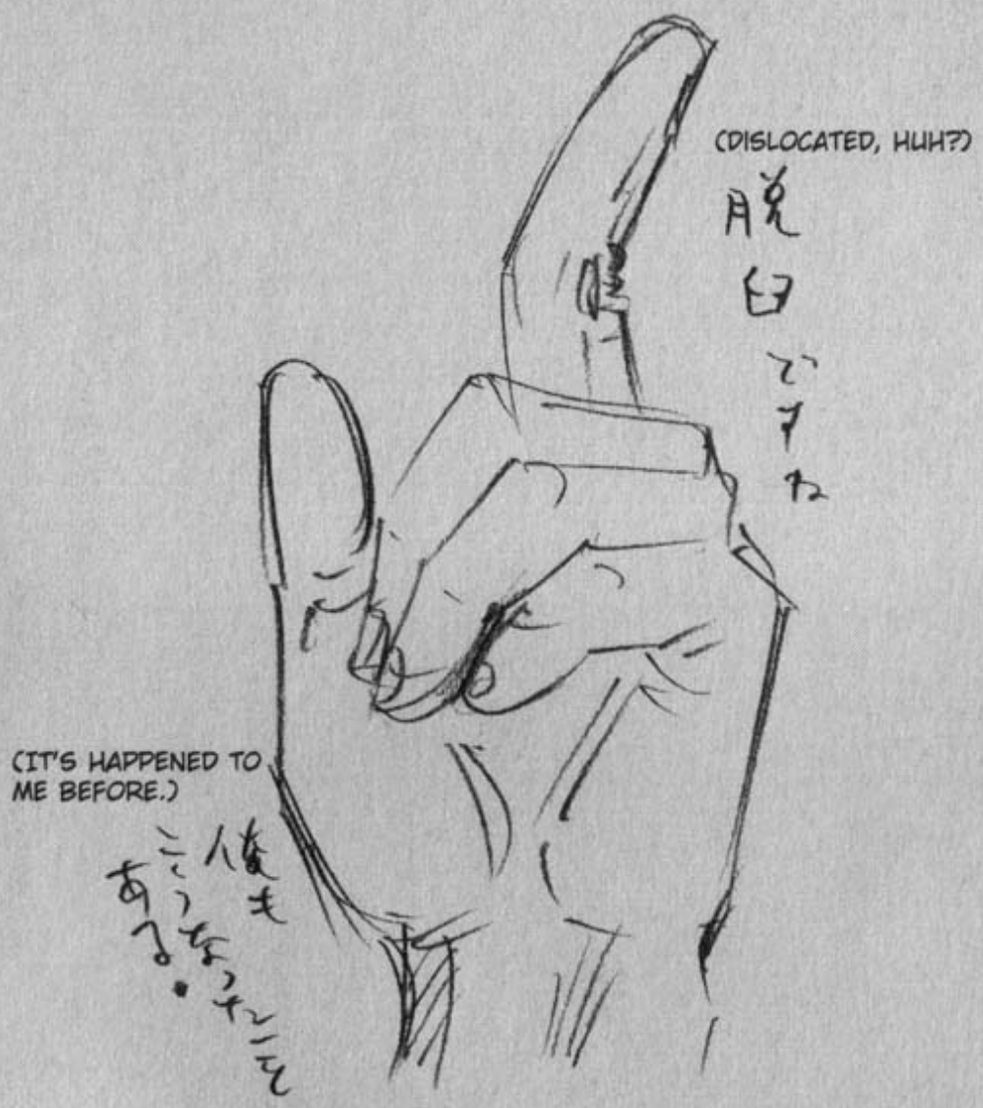
HMM...
HUF. HUF.


...AND THAT'S WHERE THE LORD'S COTTAGE IS.

YOU WILL DIE ON THIS BRIDGE, MUSASHI!!
WE MUST NOT LET THAT HAPPEN!!
FICH
I, KIZAEMON SHŌDA, SHALL ADVANCE!!

I SEE... WE START WITH THE STRONGEST ONE.
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.

Vagabond


(DISLOCATED, HUH?)
(IT'S HAPPENED TO ME BEFORE.)

HUF HUF...
THOSE FOUR MEN MUST BE THE BEST SWORDSMEN OF THE YAGYŪ SCHOOL.
MY MASTER'S STRONG, BUT HE'S IN SERIOUS TROUBLE.
HUF HUF.
FOUR AGAINST ONE! THAT'S NO FAIR!
I'LL ASK OTSŪ FOR HELP!!
HUF.
BUT WHERE IS SHE?
HUF HUF...
HOW CAN I FIND HER?!
AHH!
WHUD
WHOOSH
AHH!

#93 Valor

FMP
DON'T GET CAUGHT UP WITH WHAT SHŌDA IS DOING!
OR YOU'LL UNDER-ESTIMATE THE ADVANTAGE WE HAVE AS A GROUP.

THERE MUST BE SOMETHING ABOUT THAT BASTARD.
SOMETHING YOU CAN ONLY KNOW BY CHALLENGING HIM IN BATTLE.

THIS IS *OUR* FIGHT.
WE JUST HAVE TO STAY CALM AND FOCUS ON STOPPING THIS MAN.

THAT MUSASHI ISN'T EVEN IN A FIGHTING STANCE...
WHY ISN'T SHŌDA ATTACKING?
WHY IS HE RETREATING?!

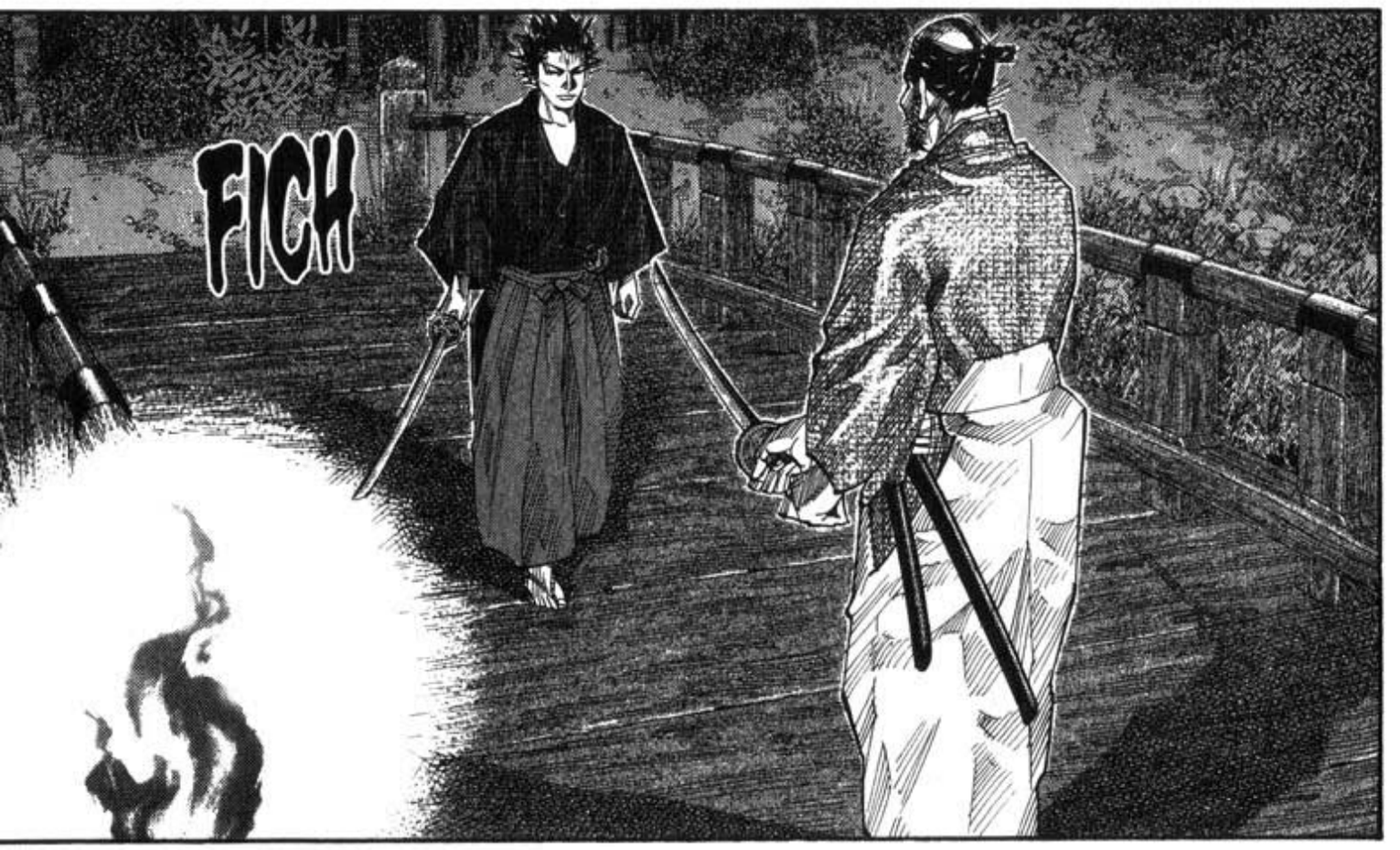
HUF...
HUF...

WHAT'S WRONG?
DON'T RETREAT!!

FICH

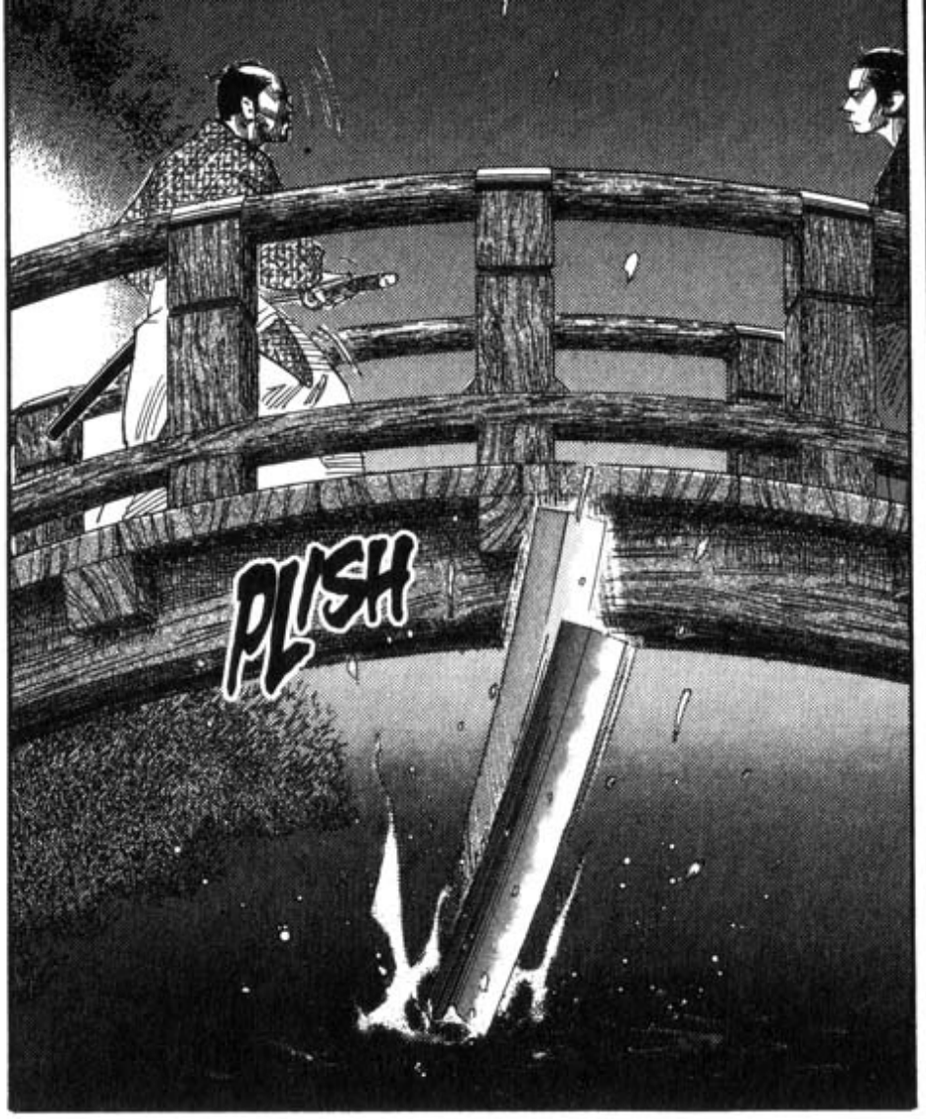
FICH

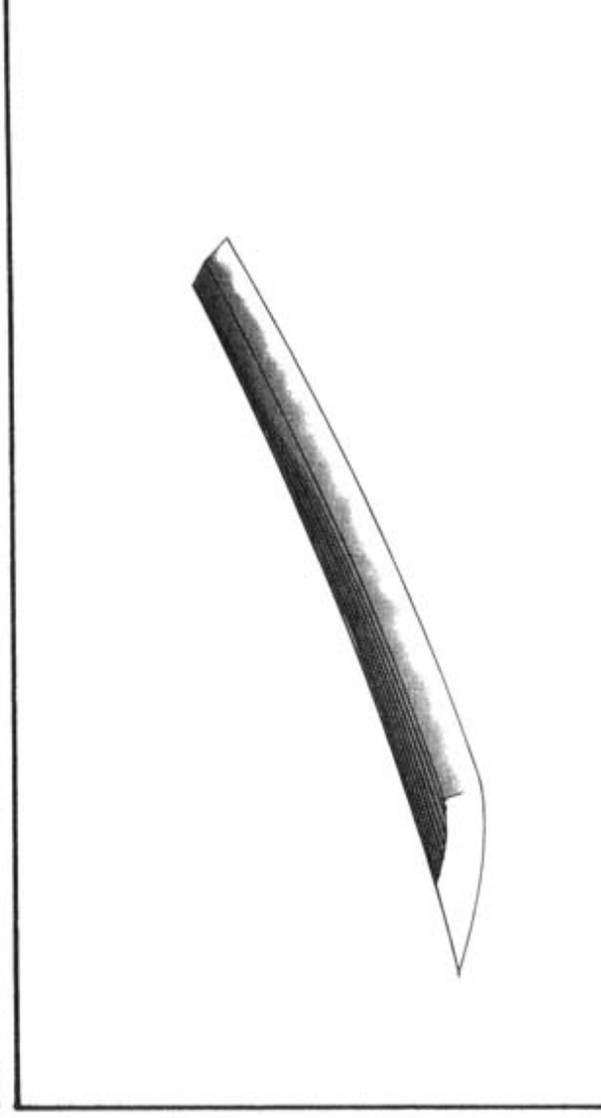
...!!


FICH

HUF...
HUF...

DOES HE SEE RIGHT THROUGH ME?
.....
TUMP


PLISH



FICH
THIS MAN...
HIS ONE-HANDED SWORD COULD CUT THROUGH BONE!
...!!

HOW COULD I, KIZAEMON SHŌDA, BE AFRAID?!
HMPH!

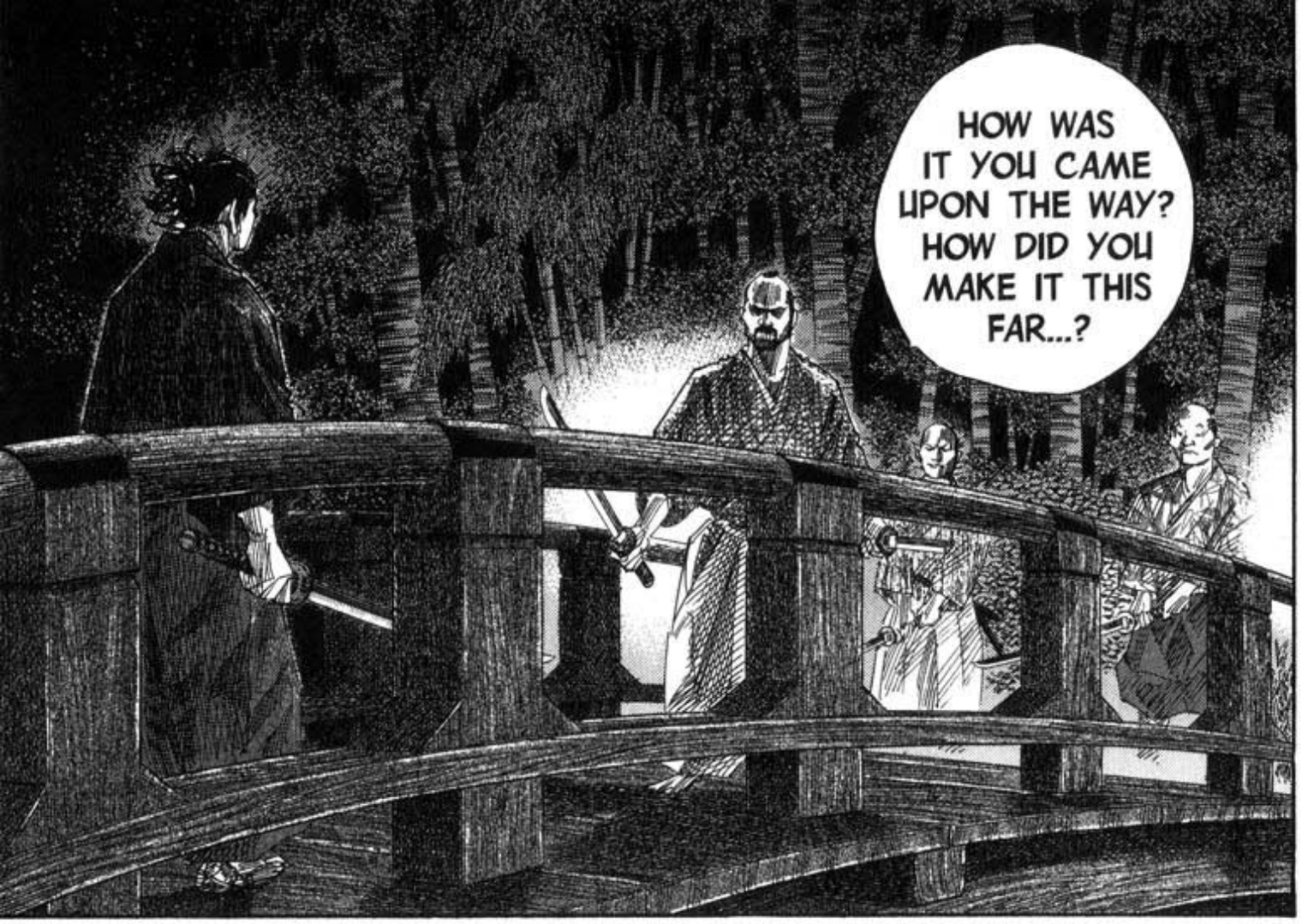
THIS FEELING...

FICH

...SOMEHOW...
...IT'S AS IF HE'S NOT THINKING AT ALL...
EVEN IF I THINK TWO, THREE OR EVEN FOUR MOVES AHEAD, IT'S AS IF HE'S ANTICIPATING MY EVERY MOVE...
AND YET...

...AS IF HE'S POSSESSED...
I'VE HAD THIS FEELING MANY TIMES BEFORE, FACING ANOTHER...

MUSASHI!


HOW WAS IT YOU CAME UPON THE WAY? HOW DID YOU MAKE IT THIS FAR...?

.....

I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT YOUR ORIGINS...

TUMP
TUMP

FICH
WE WILL NOT LET YOU CROSS THIS BRIDGE!!
DEBUCHI!
KIMURA!
MURATA!!

IF IT COMES DOWN TO IT, STAB THIS MAN RIGHT THROUGH MY OWN BODY.

YOU SHALL BE DYING, TOO...

THE VALOROUS MAN NAMED SHŌDA...
YOU WILL BE REMEMBERED ...

Vagabond

(HE'S SURPRISED, BUT HIS EYES ARE STILL JUST LINES.)

#94 Retribution

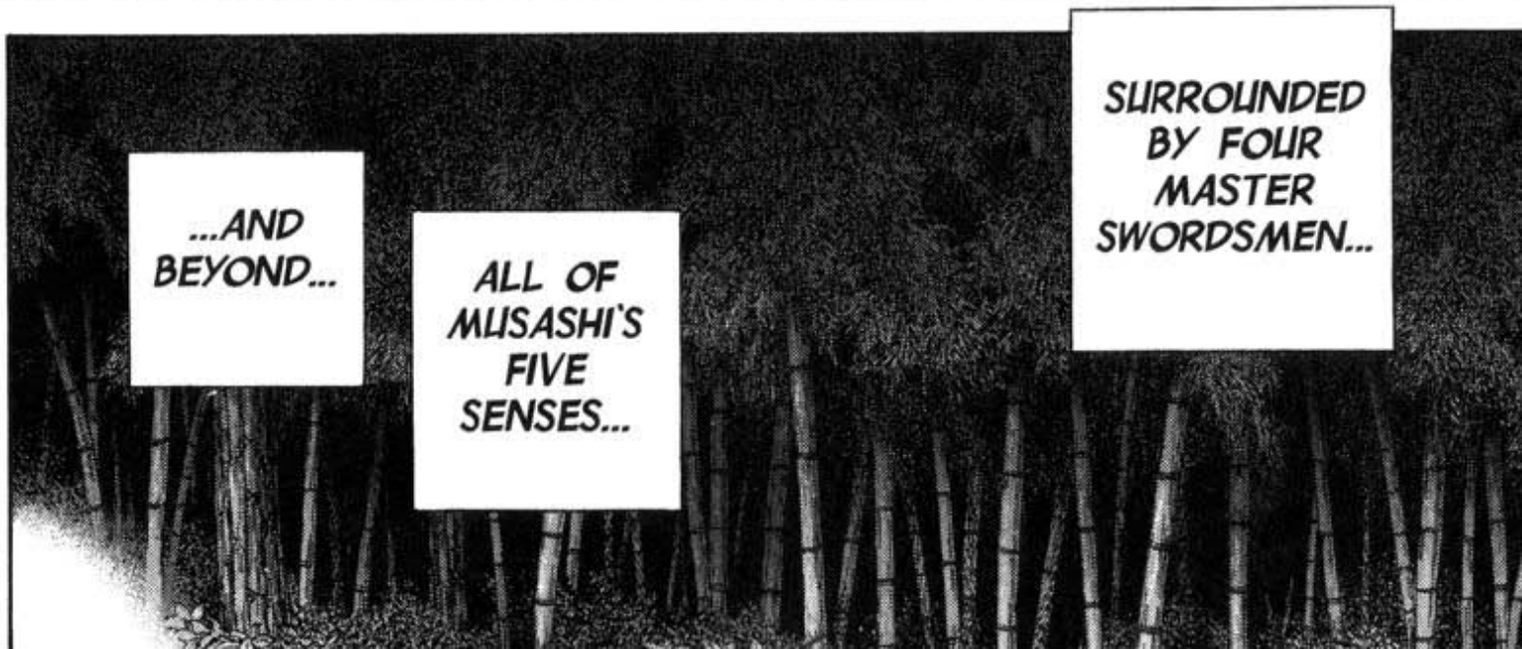
NO NEED FOR A FIGHTING STANCE?
I'M FINE AS I AM.

I KNOW YOUR INTENT IS NOT TO DISPARAGE ME.

I UNDER-STAND, MUSASHI.

SIR SHŌDA.
LET US NOT FORGET.
THIS IS NO DUEL.

THIS IS RETRIBUTION.


SURROUNDED BY FOUR MASTER SWORDSMEN...
ALL OF MUSASHI'S FIVE SENSES...
...AND BEYOND...

...EVEN MUSASHI'S SIXTH SENSE WAS ON EDGE, PUSHED TO LIMITS EXTREME.

THEY'RE PANICKED ?

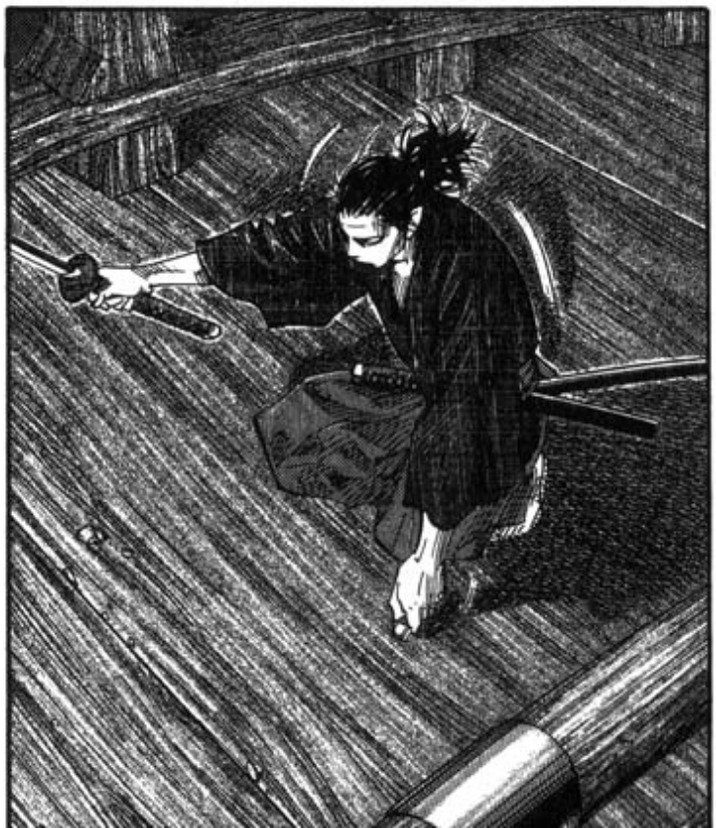
!!

SEKISHŪSAI!
FWOOSH
MUSASHI!!

VWOOM
!!

!!
FIP

SEKISHŪSAI MUST BE NEAR AT HAND!
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.
SUCH BLOODLUST...
HUF.
HUF.
UNF...
HUF.
HUF.



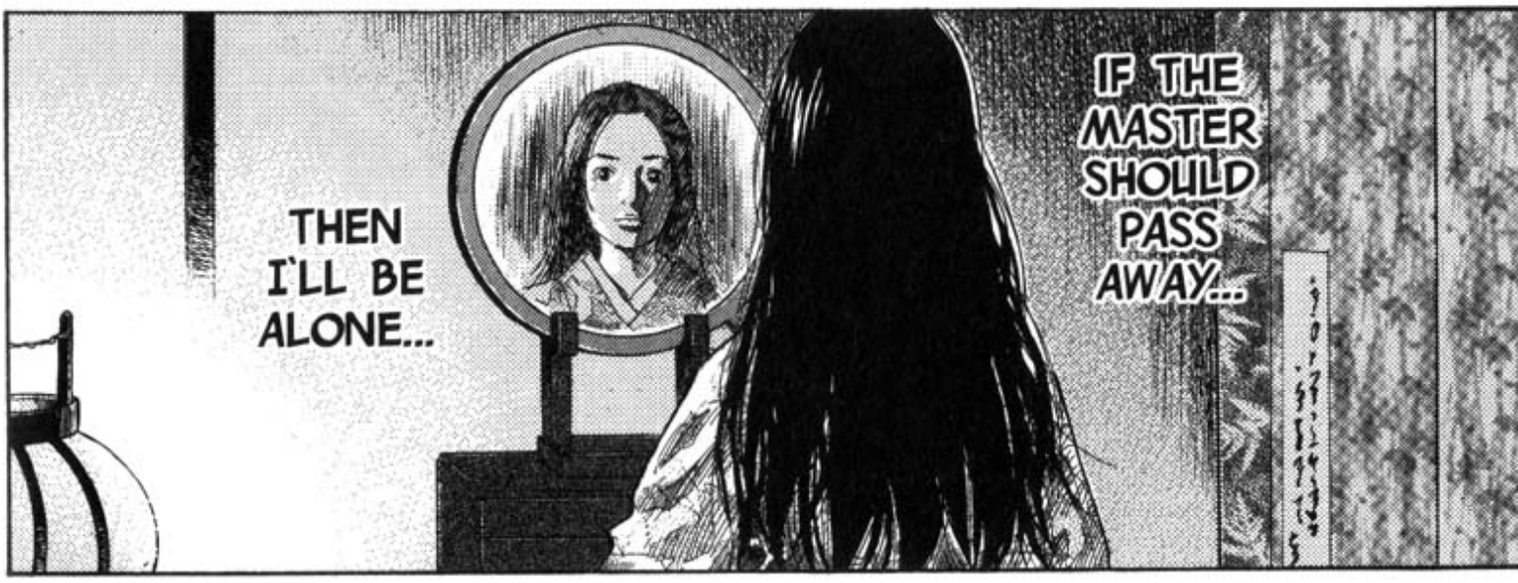
HE'S LIKE A WILD BEAST!!
HUF.
HUF.

!
FWAP
UNGH...
I'LL CROSS THAT BRIDGE *AFTER* I DEFEAT YOU GUYS.
RELAX.

...!!
SPLASH

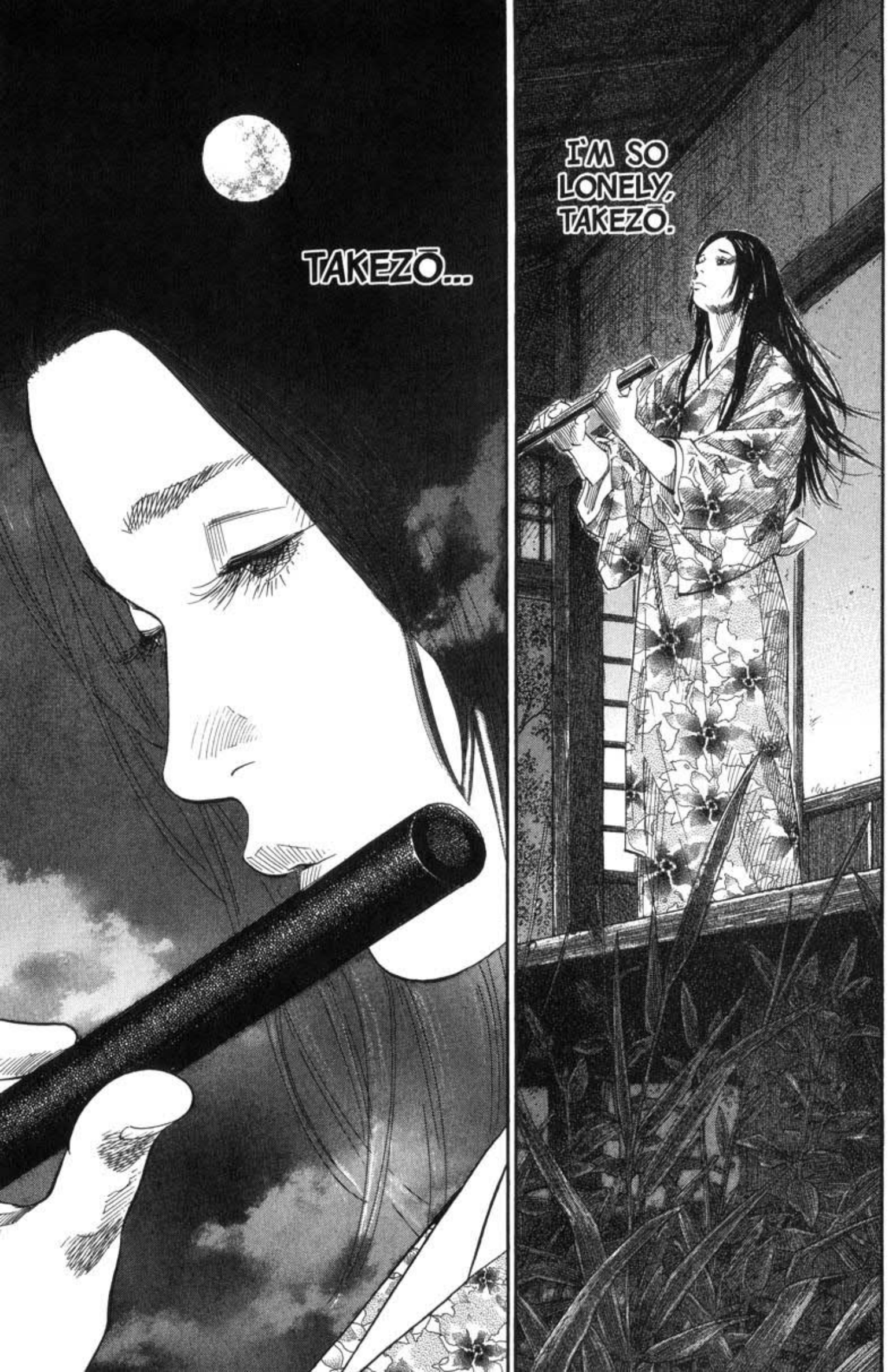
KOFF!
I WAS DAY-DREAM-ING...
.....
THEY SAY THAT YOUR LIFE FLASHES BEFORE YOUR EYES WHEN YOU DIE.
IT SEEMS TO BE TRUE, OTSŪ.
I SAW MYSELF WHEN I WAS YOUNG...
...BEFORE I EVER MET MASTER ISE...
HEH HEH...

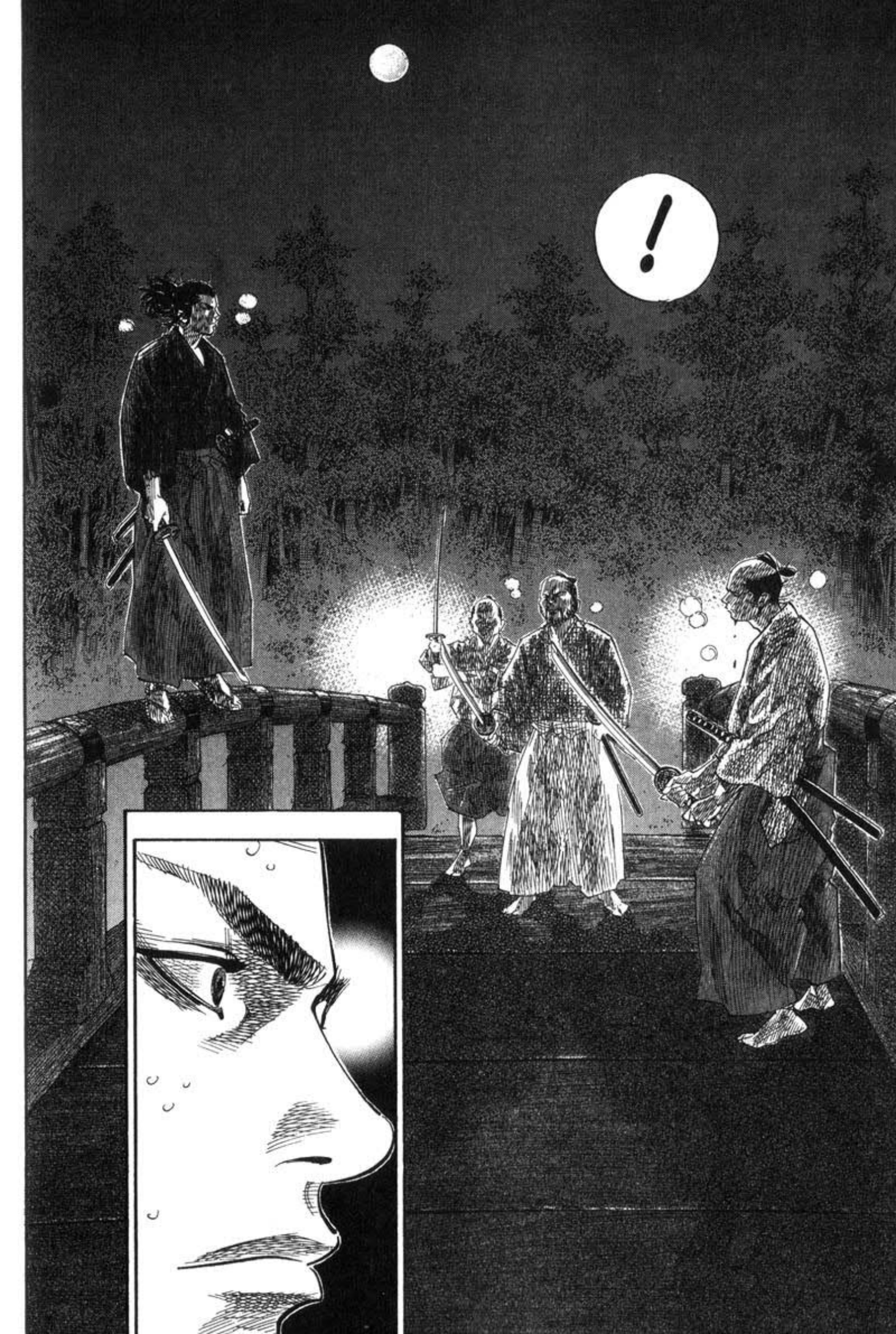
COMPLETELY MISUNDERSTOOD IT--THE MEANING OF TRUE STRENGTH...


IF THE MASTER SHOULD PASS AWAY...
THEN I'LL BE ALONE...

MAYBE I'VE GOTTEN SOFT FROM THIS NICE LIFE HERE AT THE YAGYŪ ESTATE.

NO...
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ALONE...

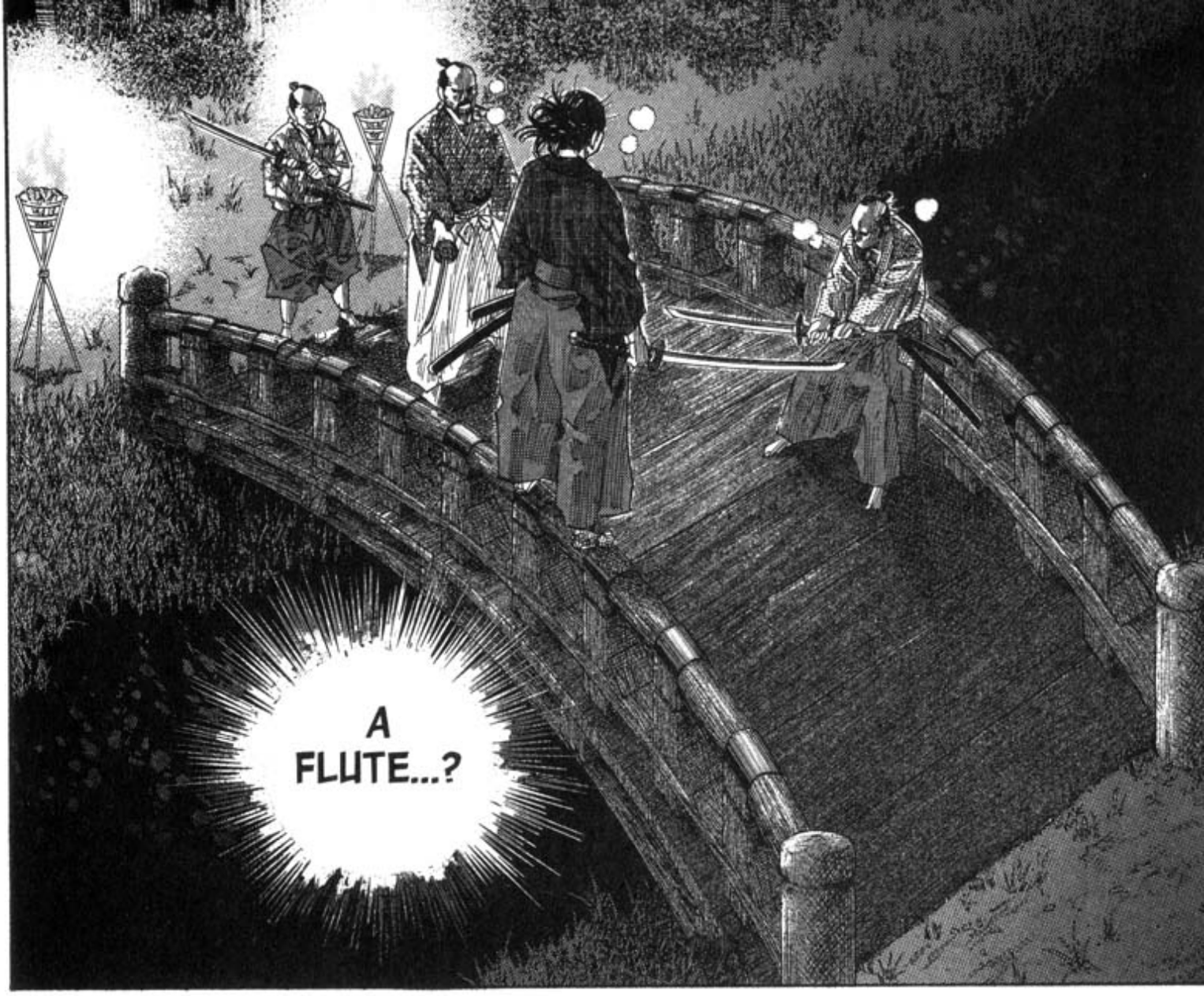

I'M SO LONELY, TAKEZŌ.
TAKEZŌ...



Vagabond

(GLUG GLUG...)
(HAVING A ROUGH TIME.)

#95 | Longing

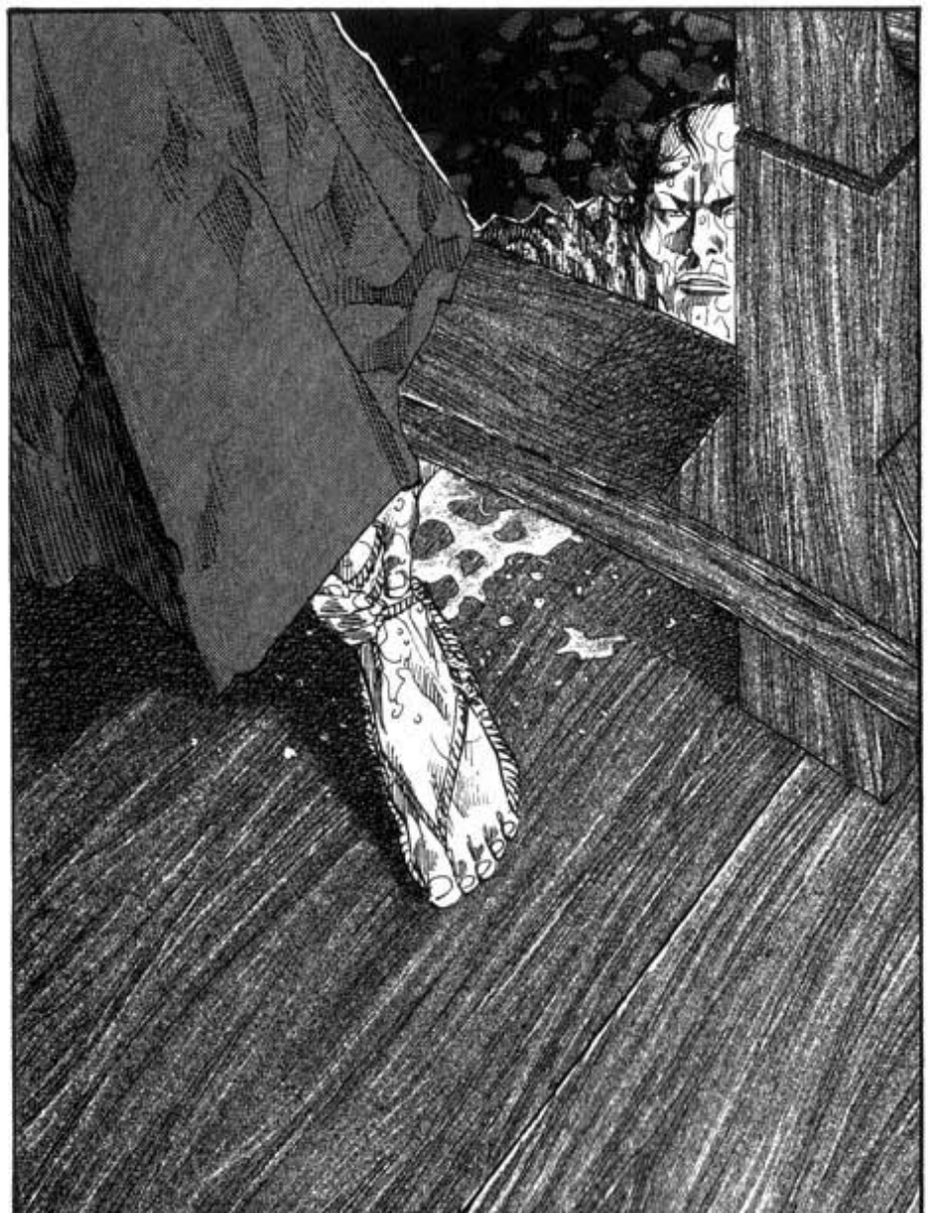

A FLUTE...?

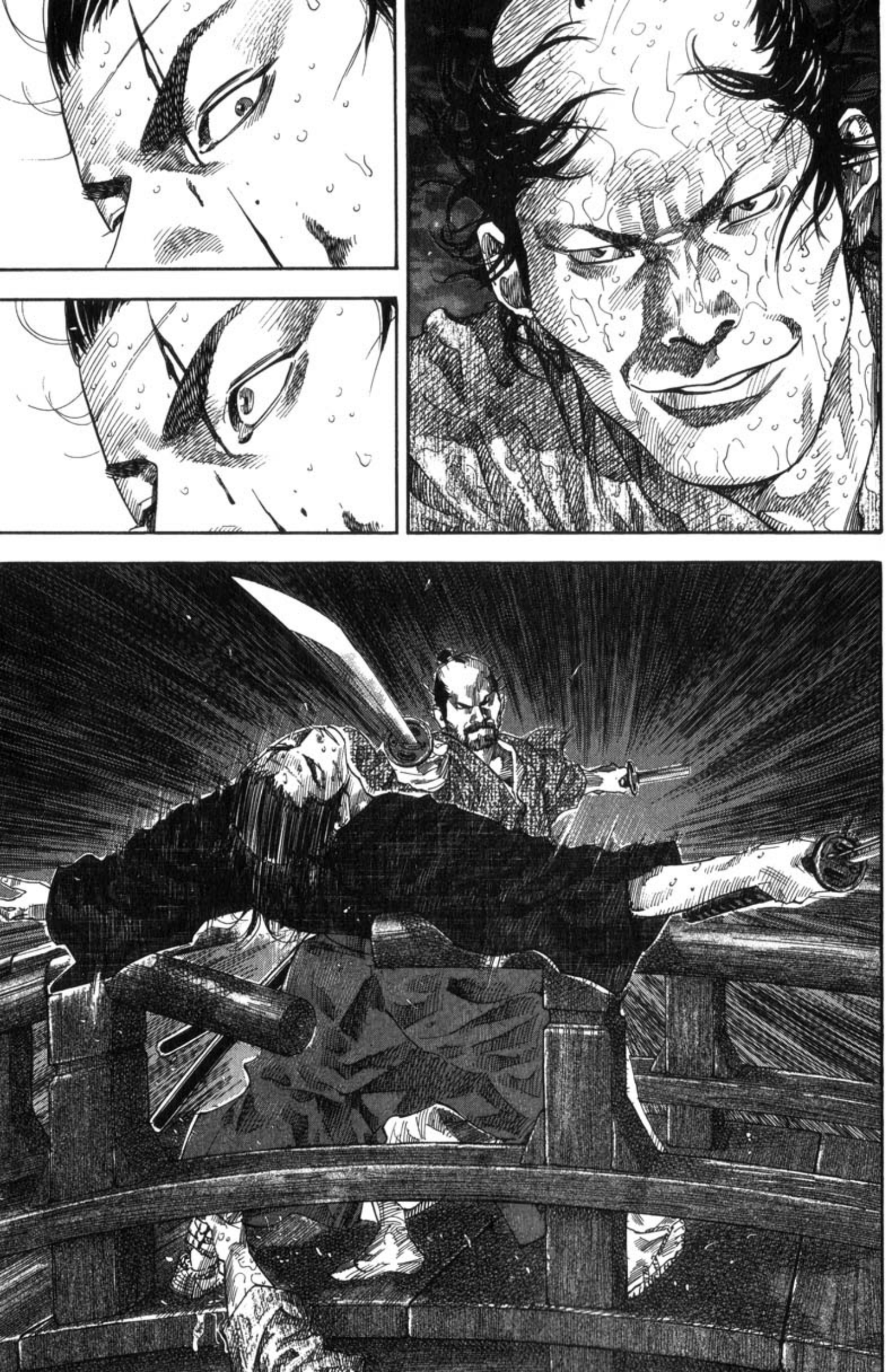
HUF.
WHO'S PLAY-ING...?
HUF.

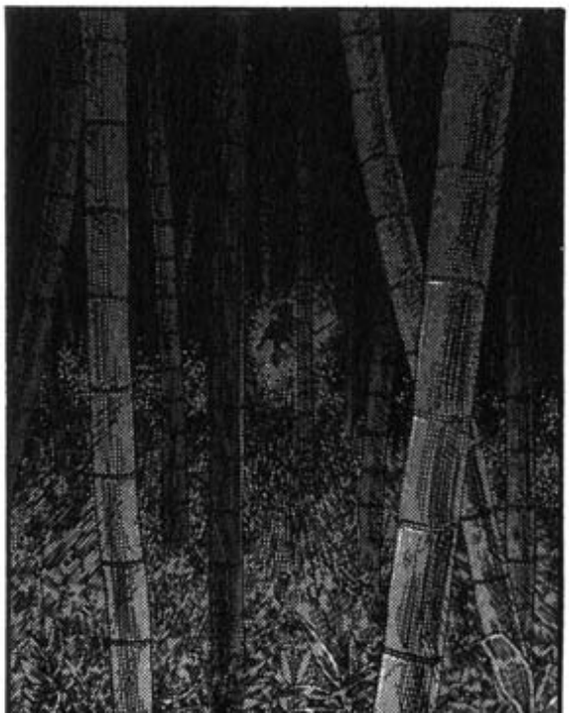
HUF.
HUF.

HUF.
HUF.

HUF.
HUF.

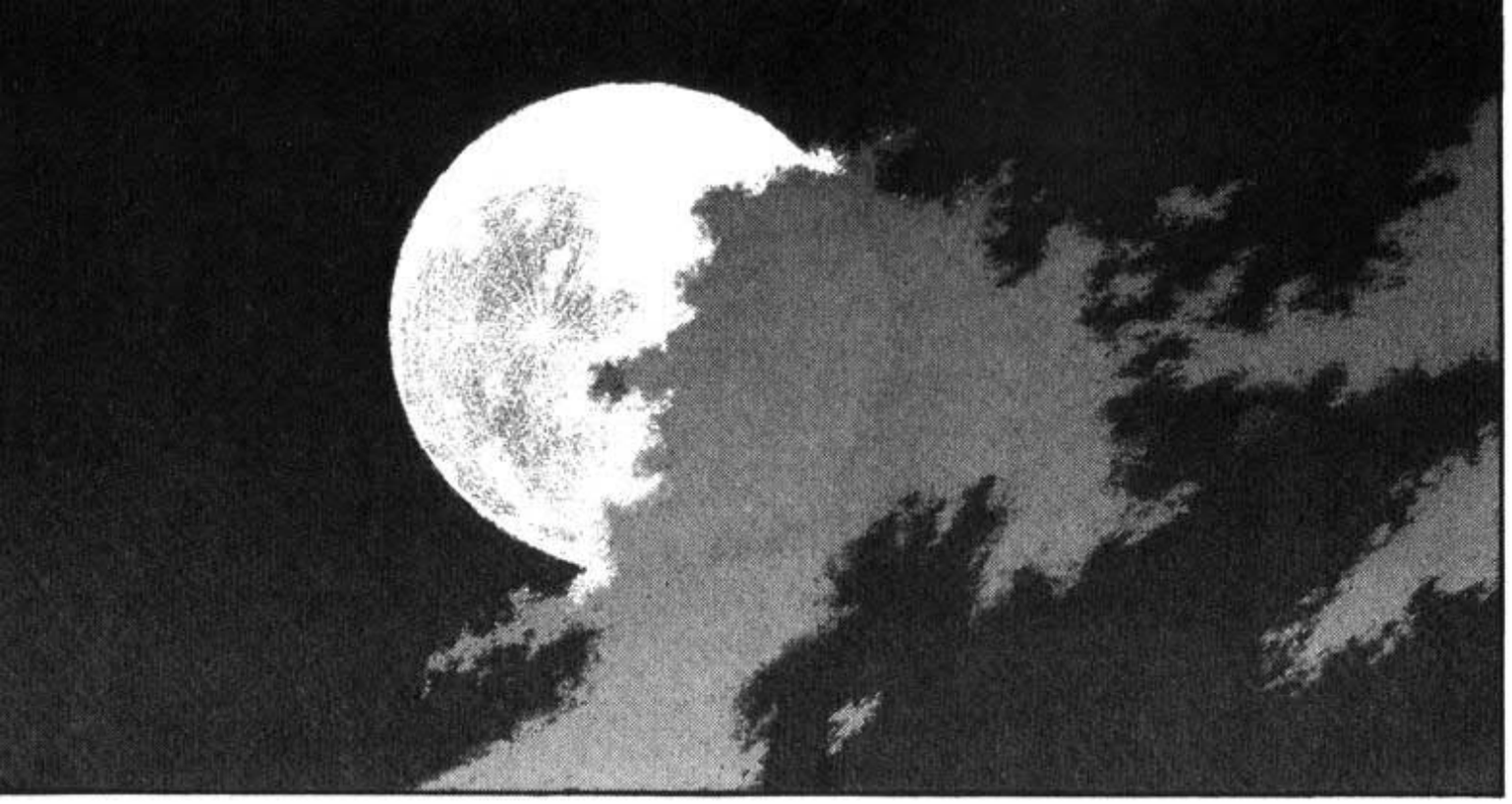






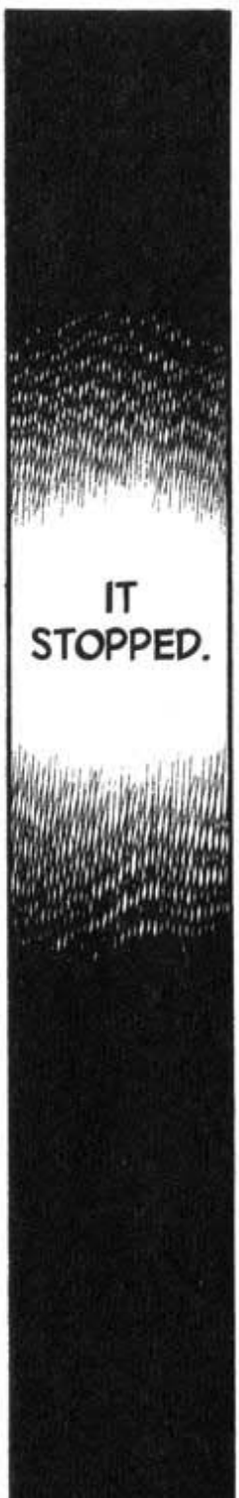
Vagabond

(MUTTER MUTTER...)

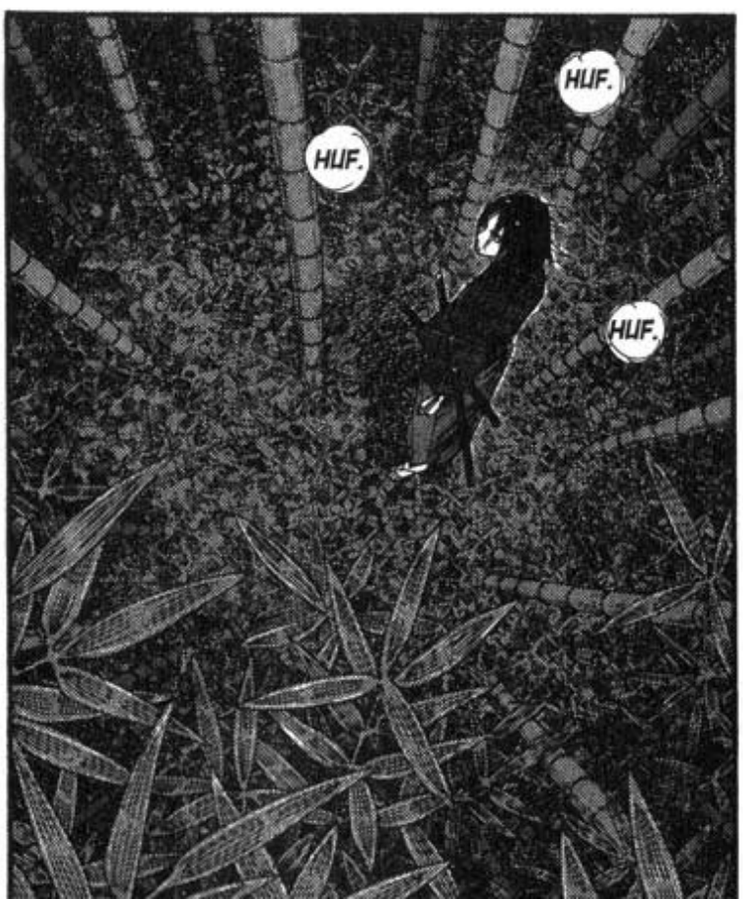


I MUST HAVE BEEN HEARING THINGS...

WAS IT SOMETHING THAT CAME FROM WITHIN MY SOUL?

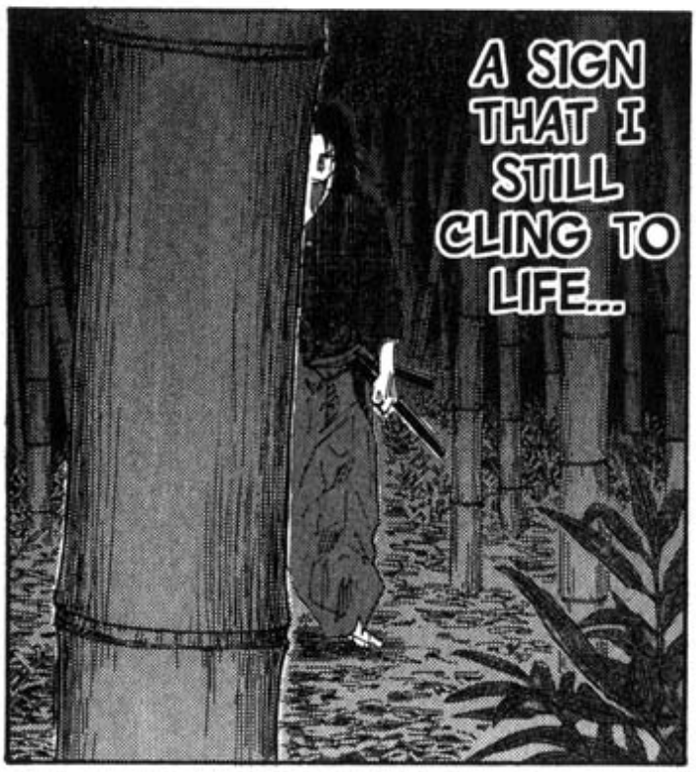

IT STOPPED.

HUF.
HUF.
HUF.


HUF.
HUF.
HUF.

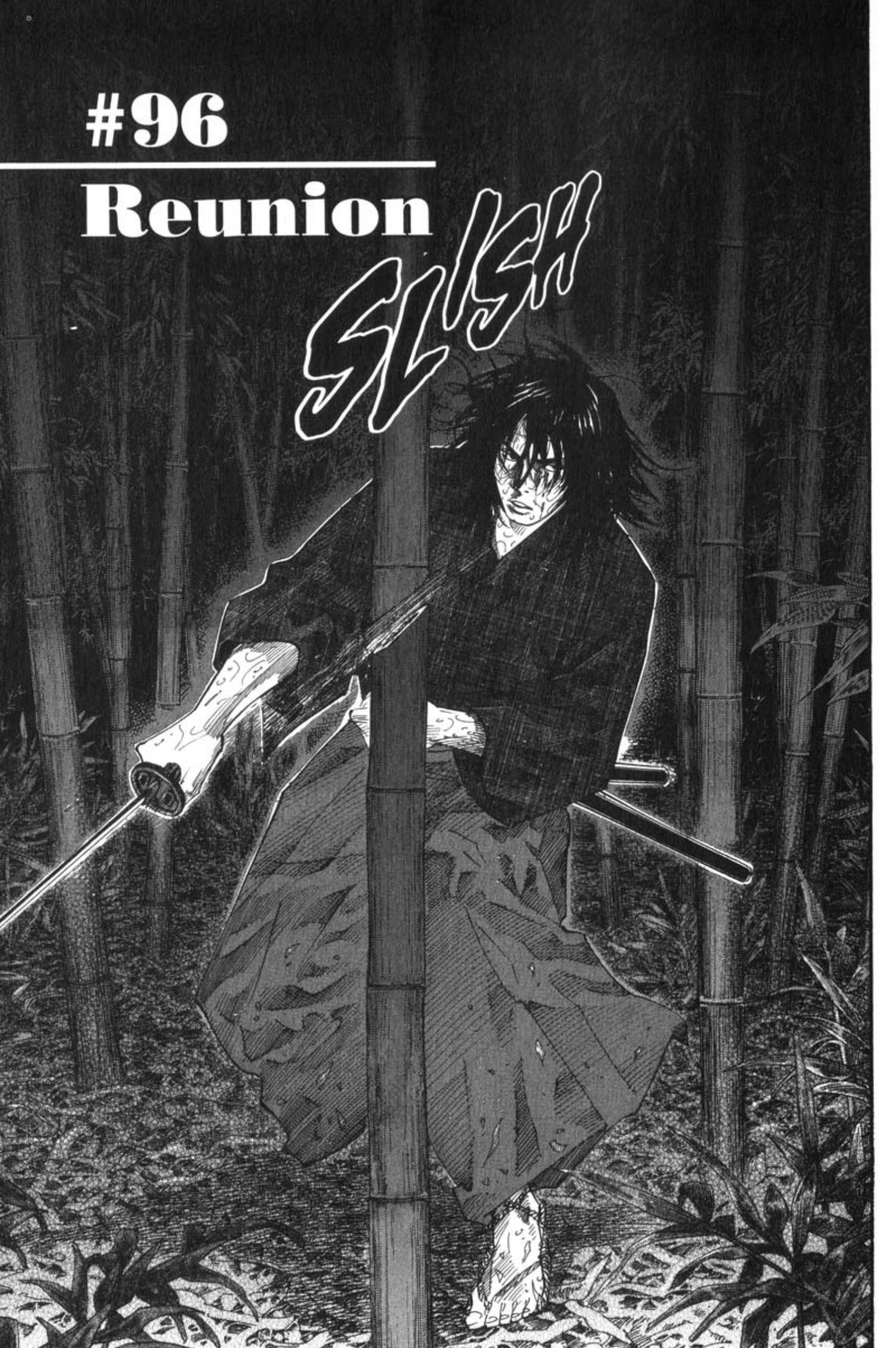
I MUST HAVE IMAGINED IT.

CHAK


A SIGN THAT I STILL CLING TO LIFE...

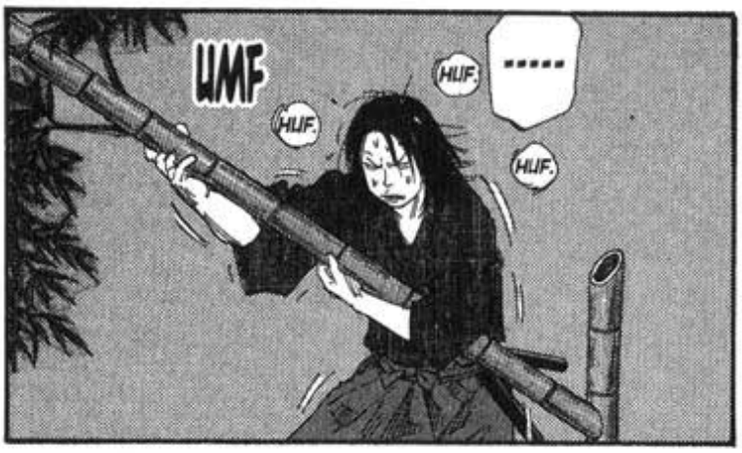
#96

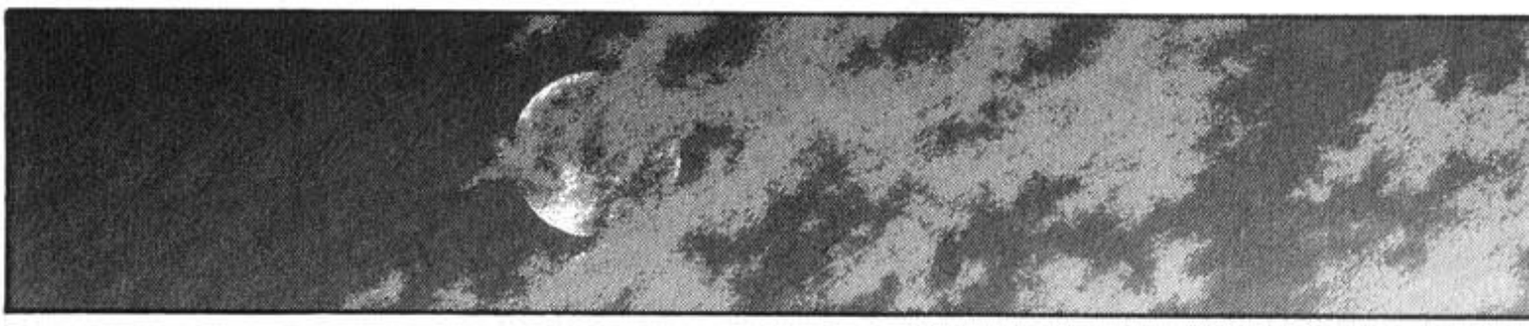
Reunion

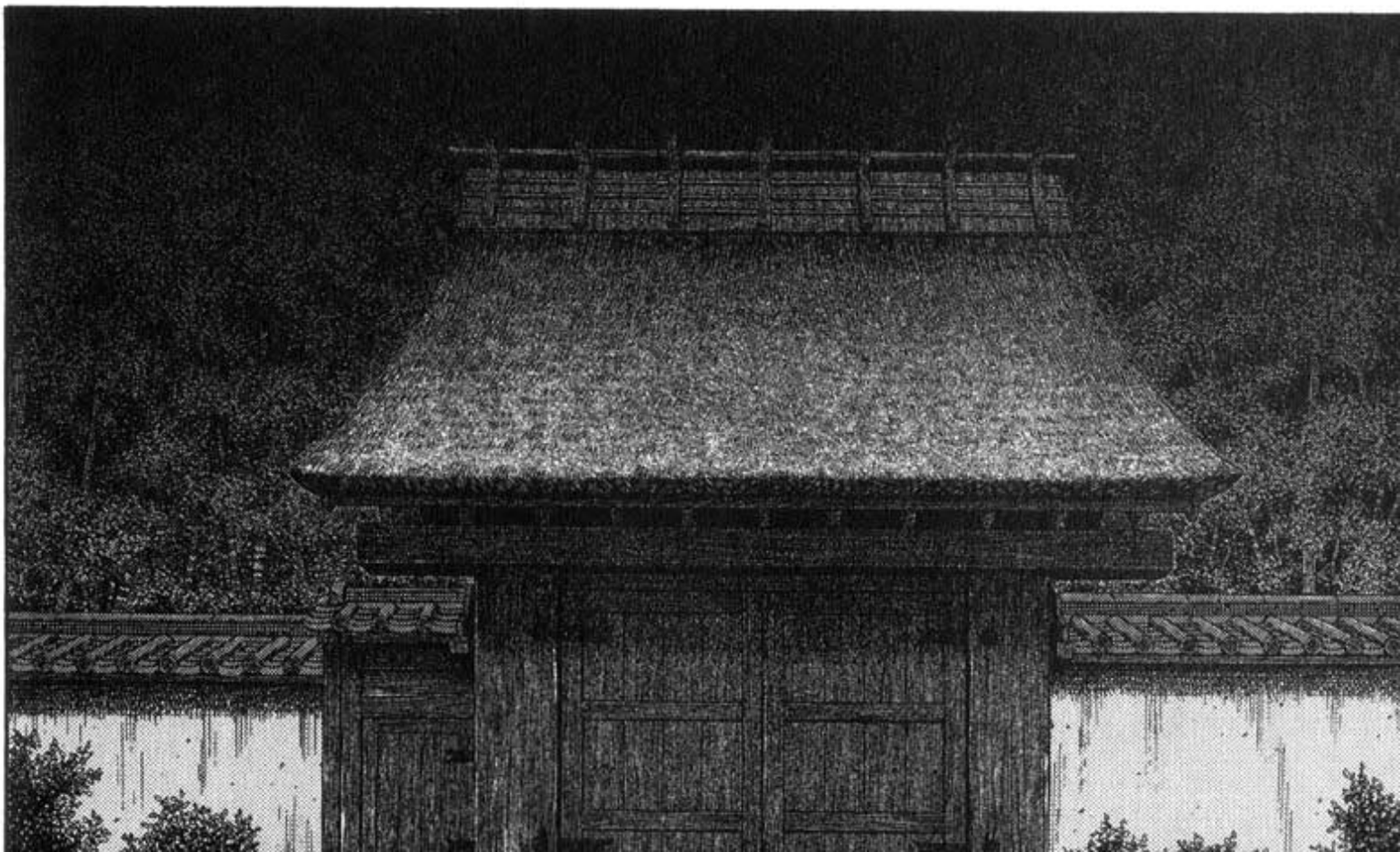


FUP
.....

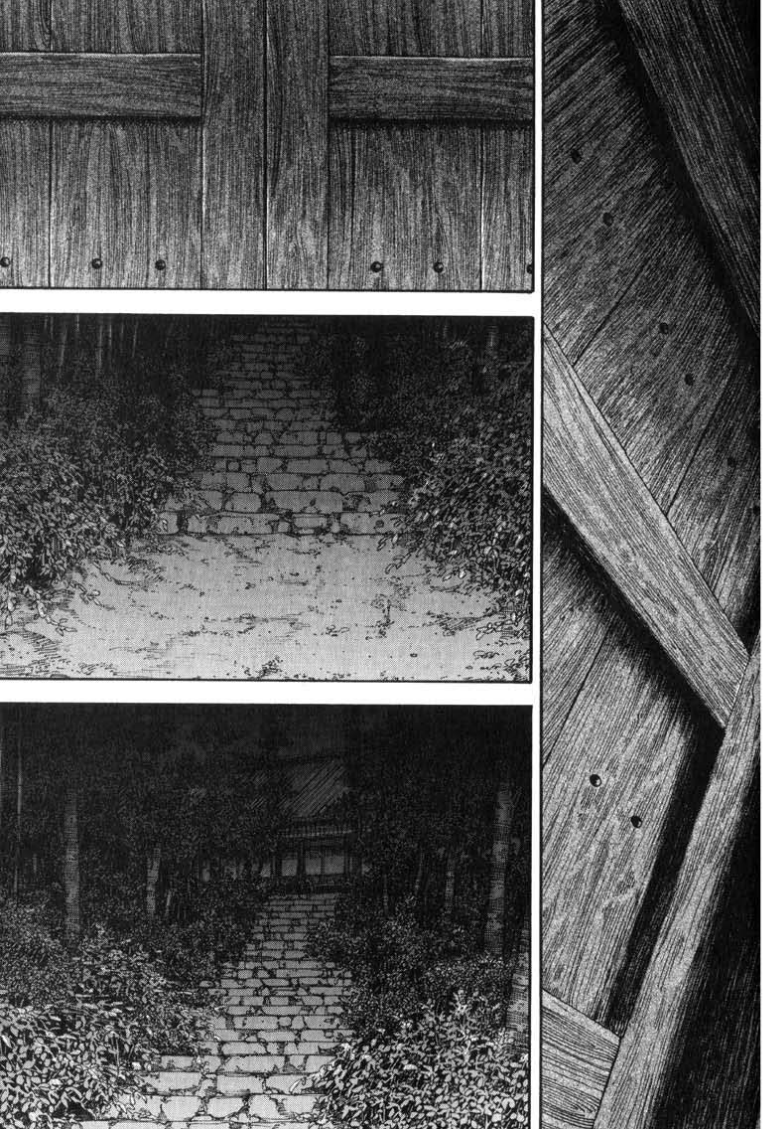
RUSTLE
HMM...

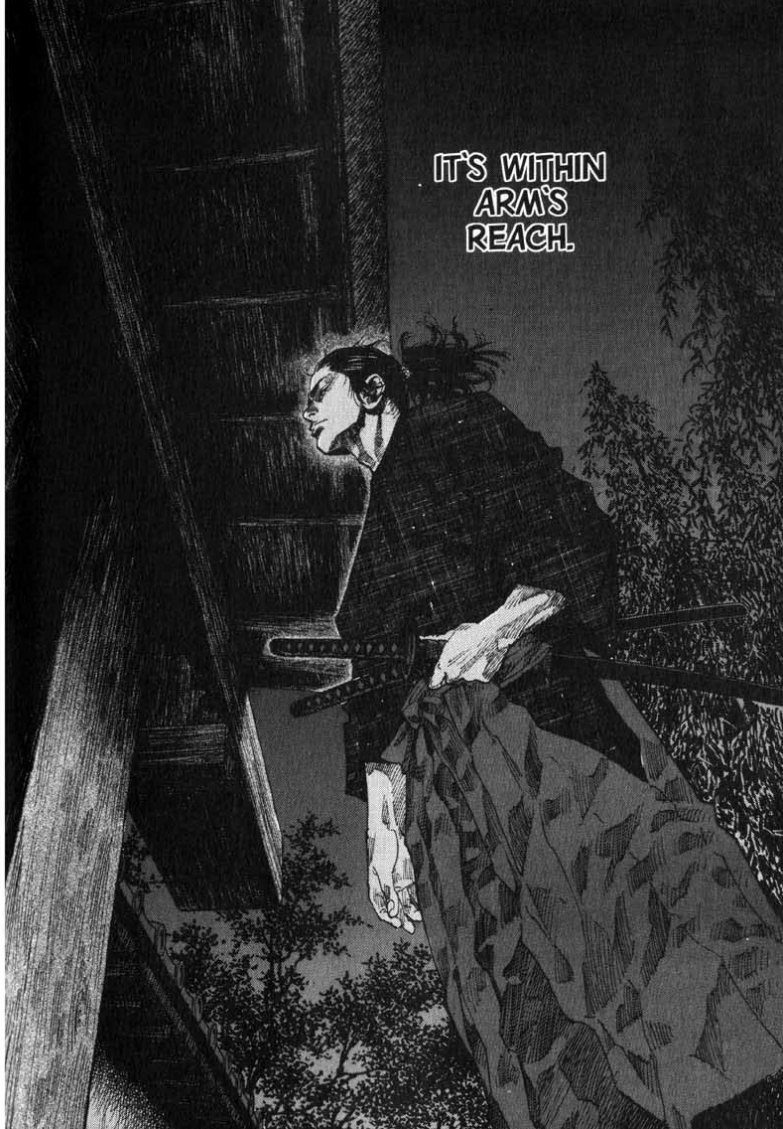

UMF
HUF.
HUF.
.....
HUF.

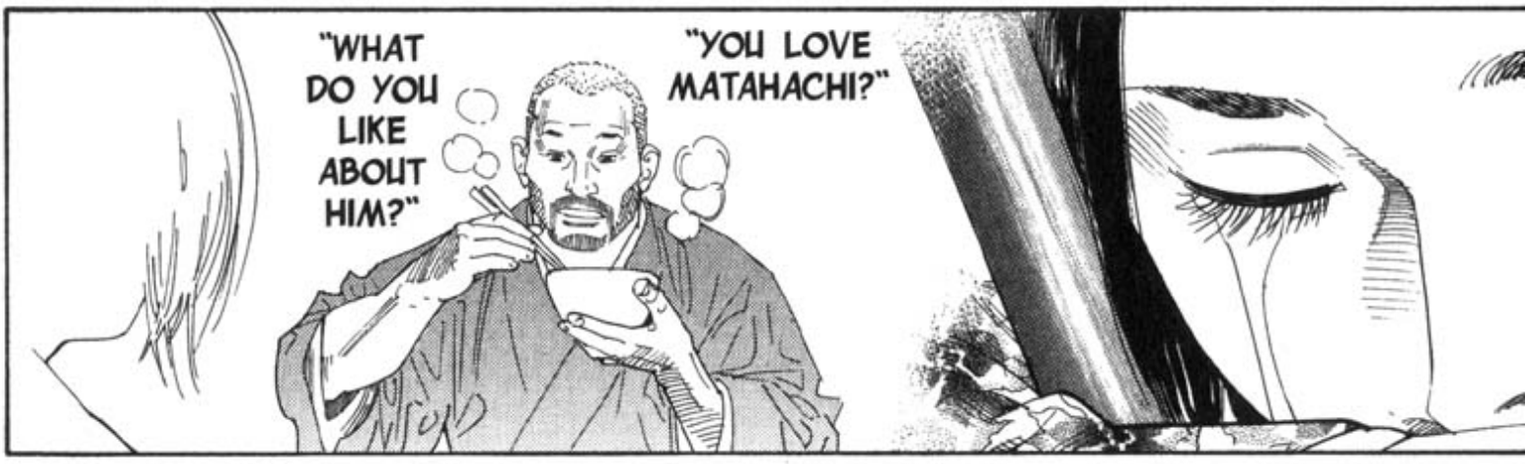


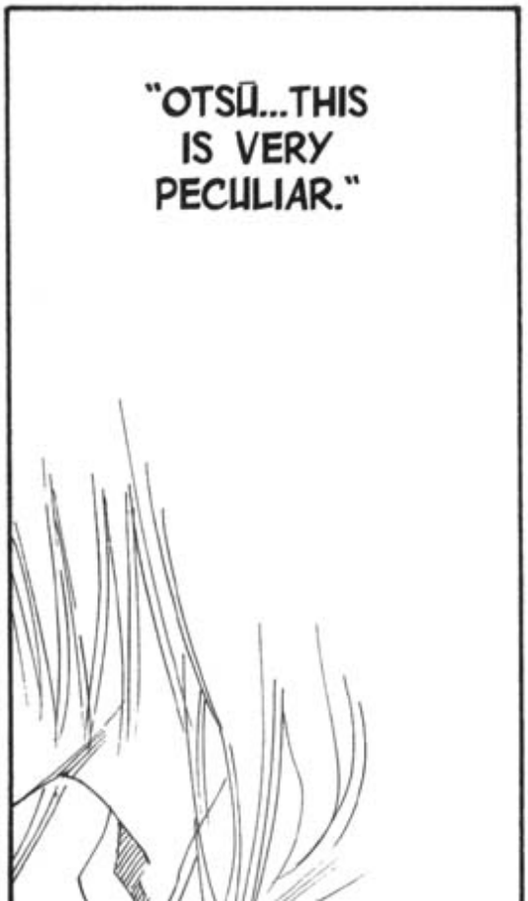


WHP
SQWNCH
THAT INVINCIBLE MIGHTY STAR...

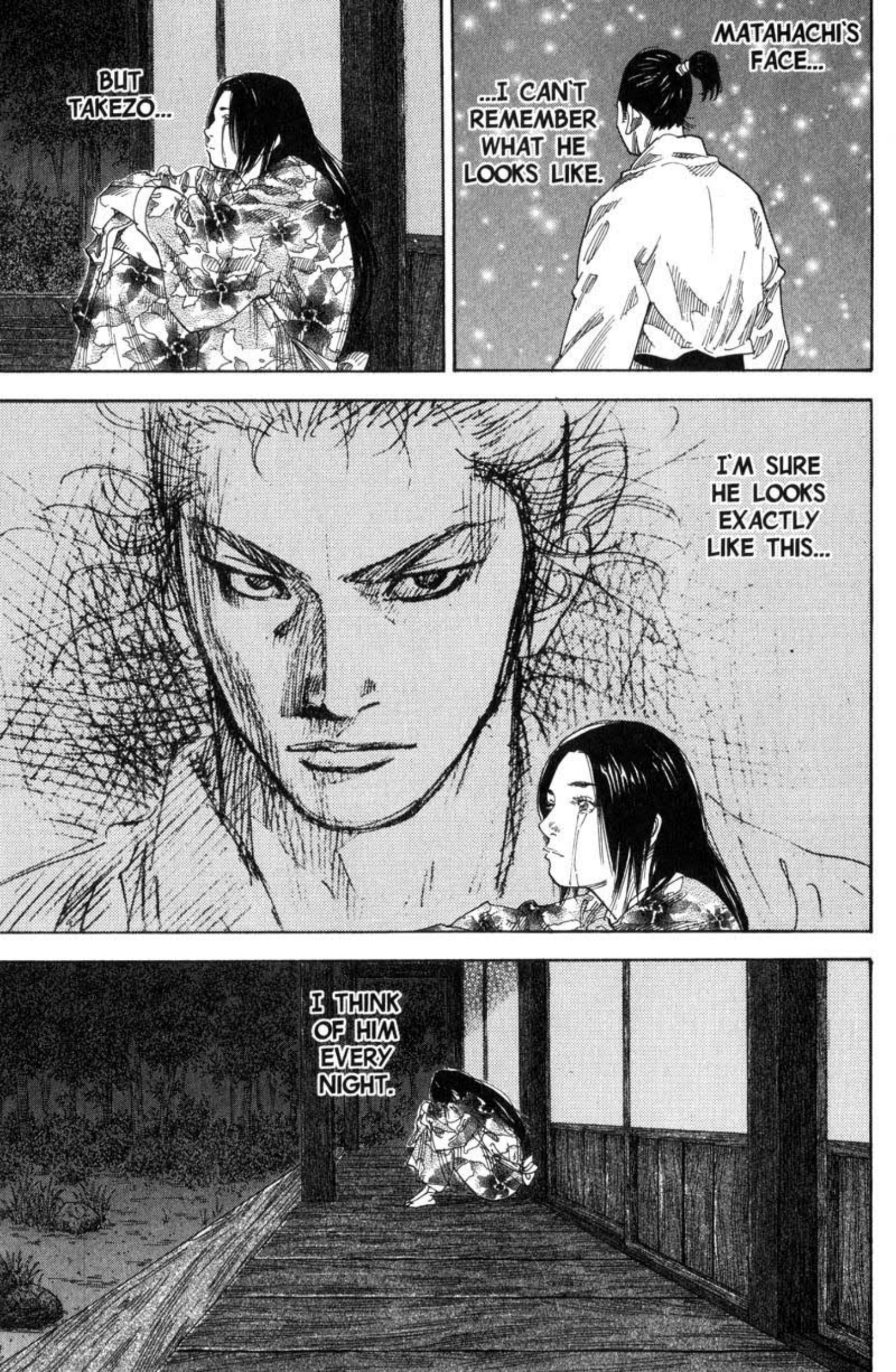


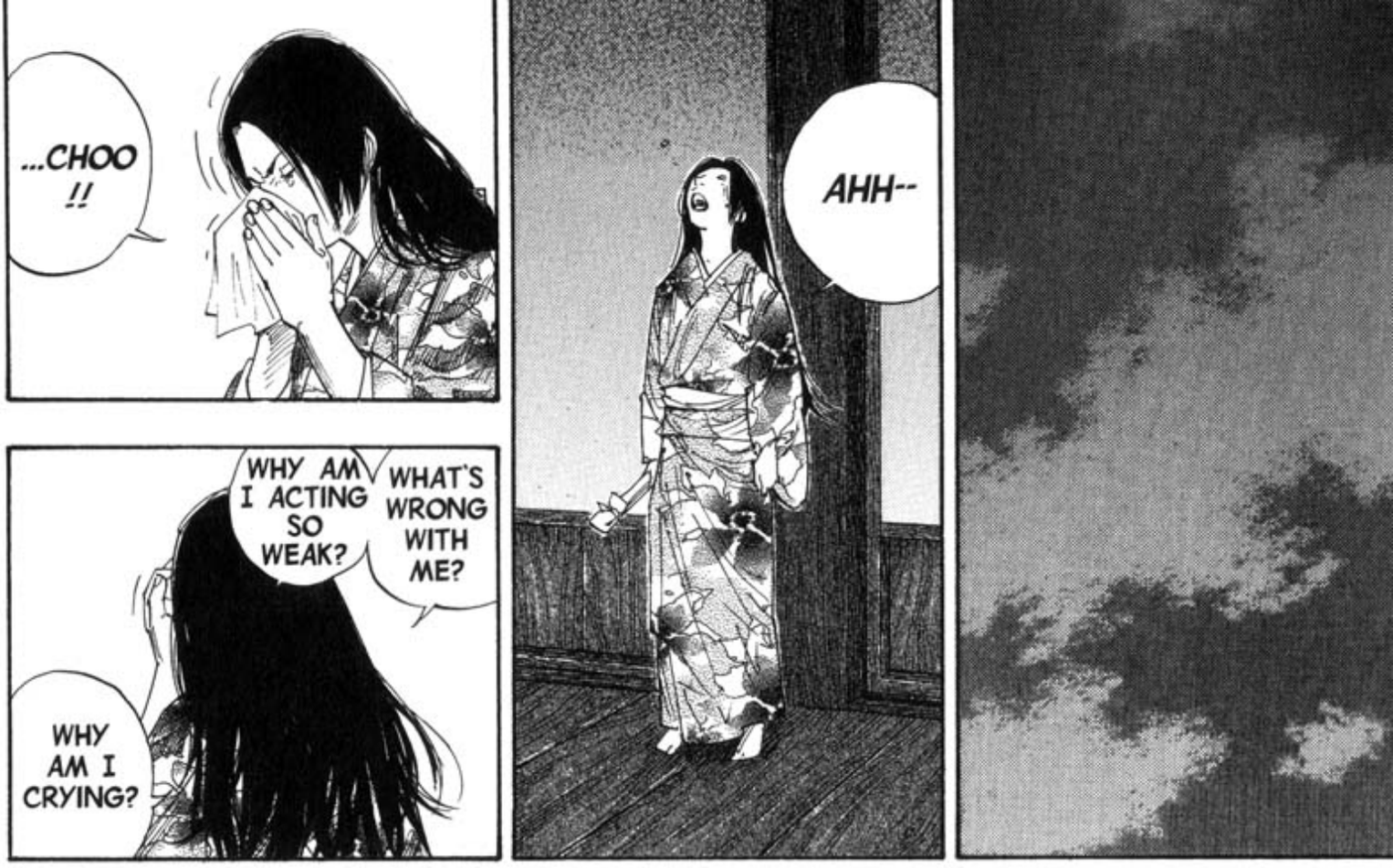

IT'S WITHIN ARM'S REACH.





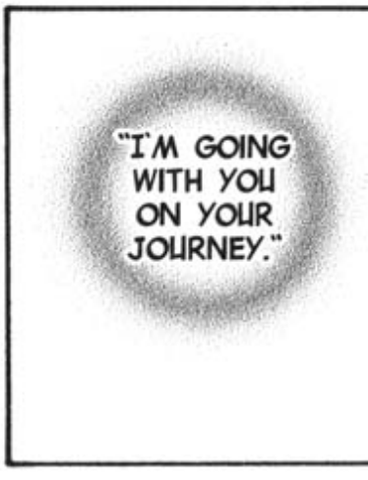
"YOU LIKED MATAHACHI BECAUSE HE CONTINUED TO BE TAKEZŌ'S FRIEND?"


BUT TAKEZŌ...
...I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE.
MATAHACHI'S FACE...
I'M SURE HE LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE THIS...
I THINK OF HIM EVERY NIGHT.

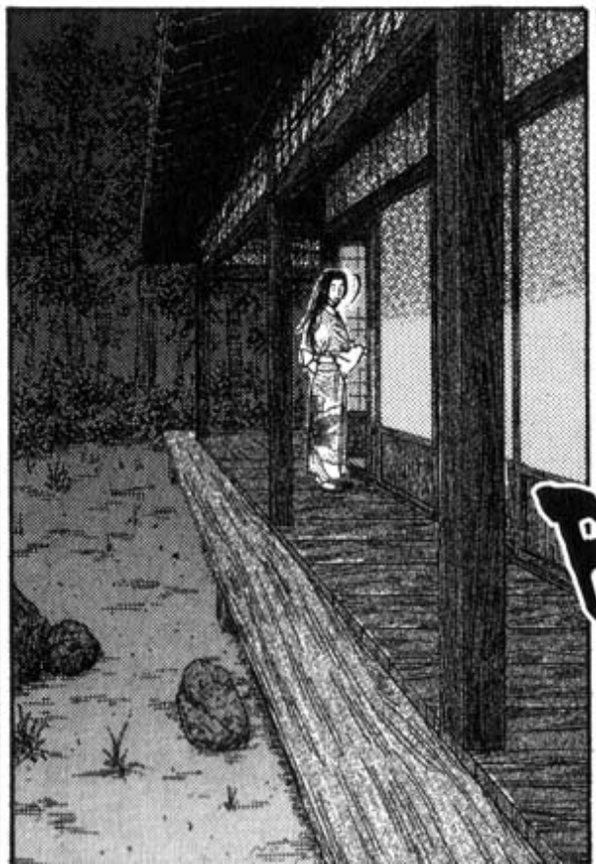

...CHOO !!
AHH--

WHY AM I ACTING SO WEAK?
WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?
WHY AM I CRYING?

"NO. YOU'LL GET IN THE WAY OF MY TRAINING."

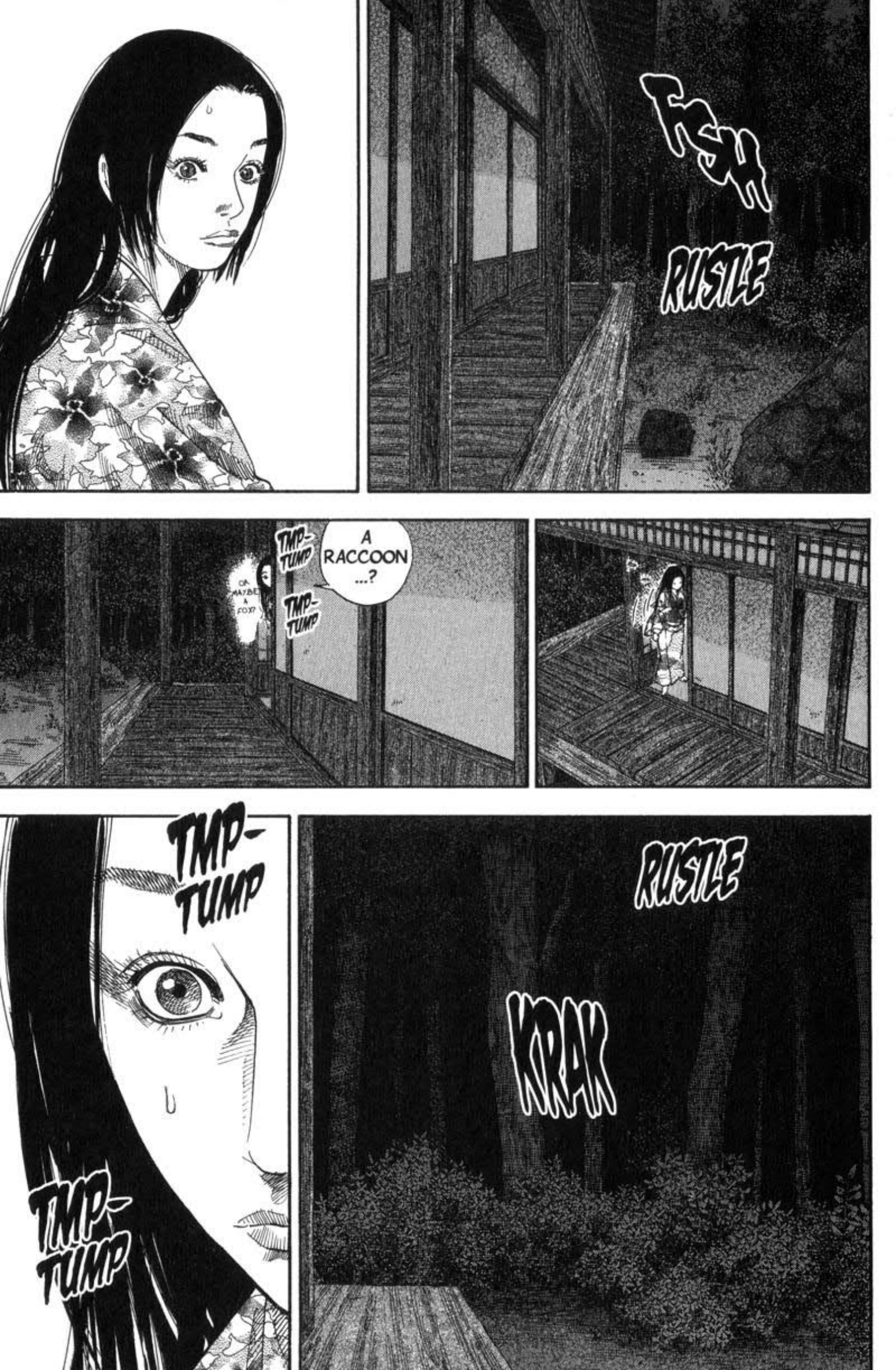

"I'M GOING WITH YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY."

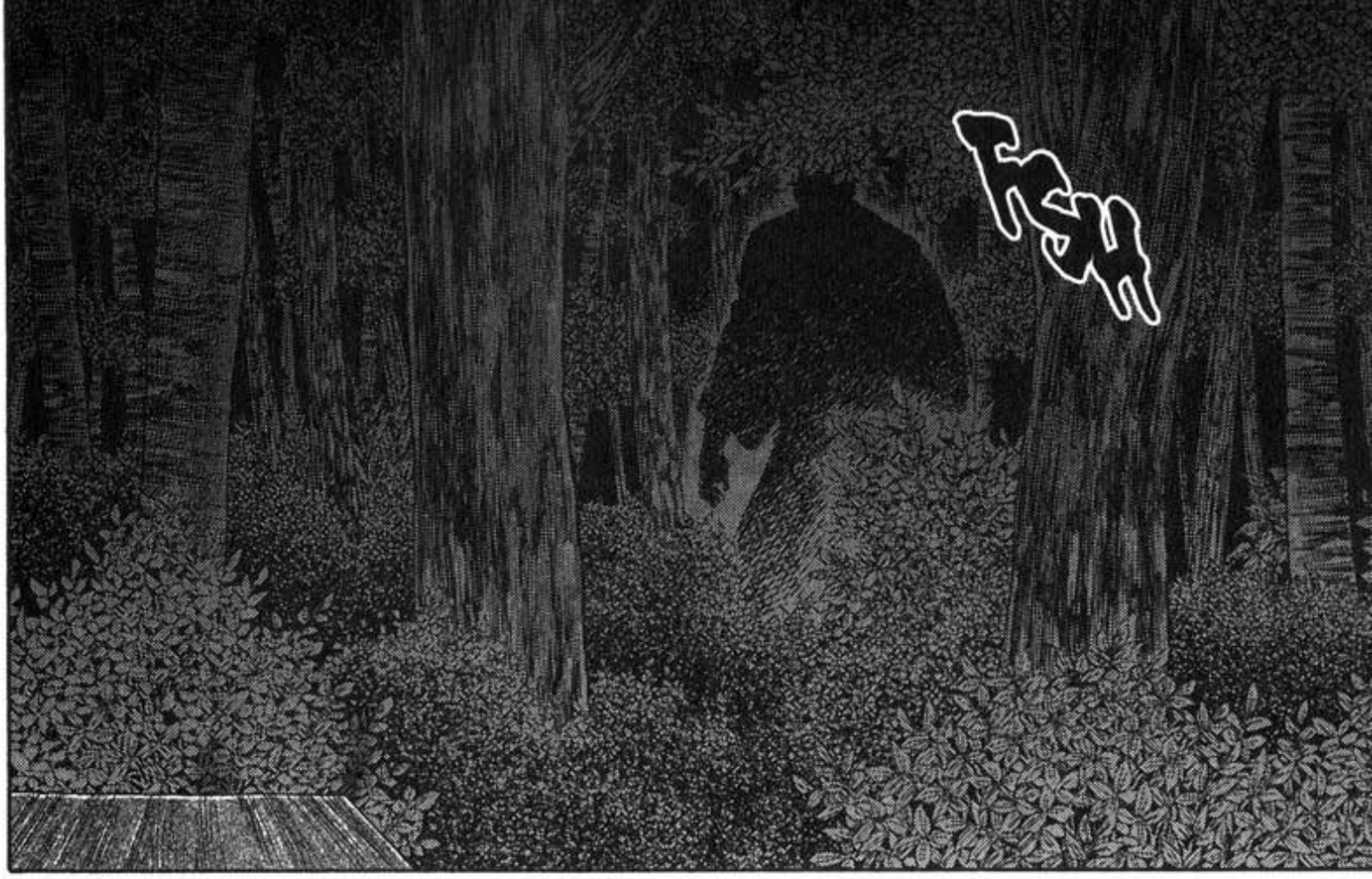
WHAT'S THAT...?



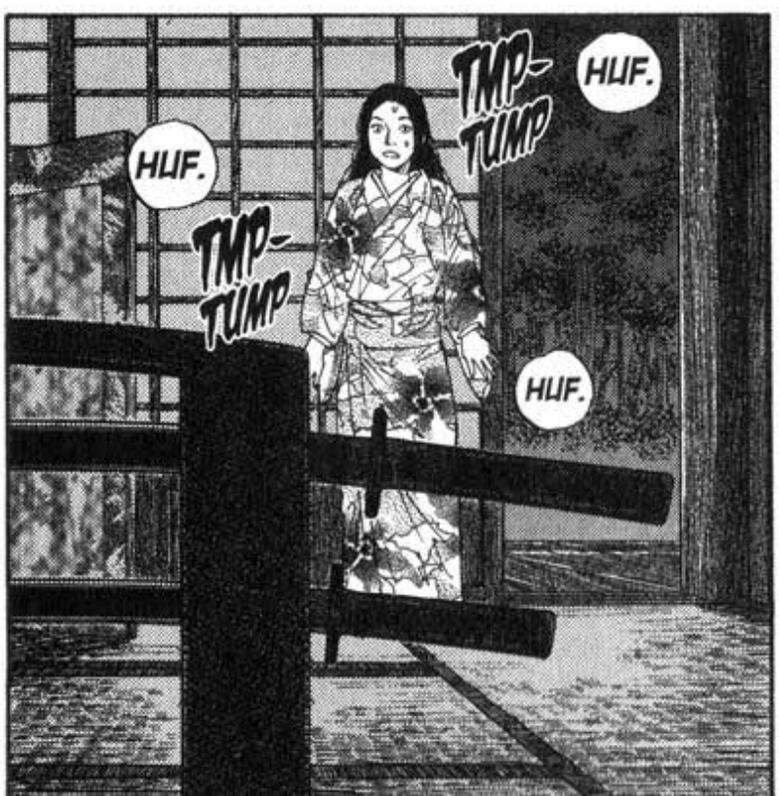
HE'S SO COLD...
SNIFF
HMPH!

TIME FOR BED.
FISH

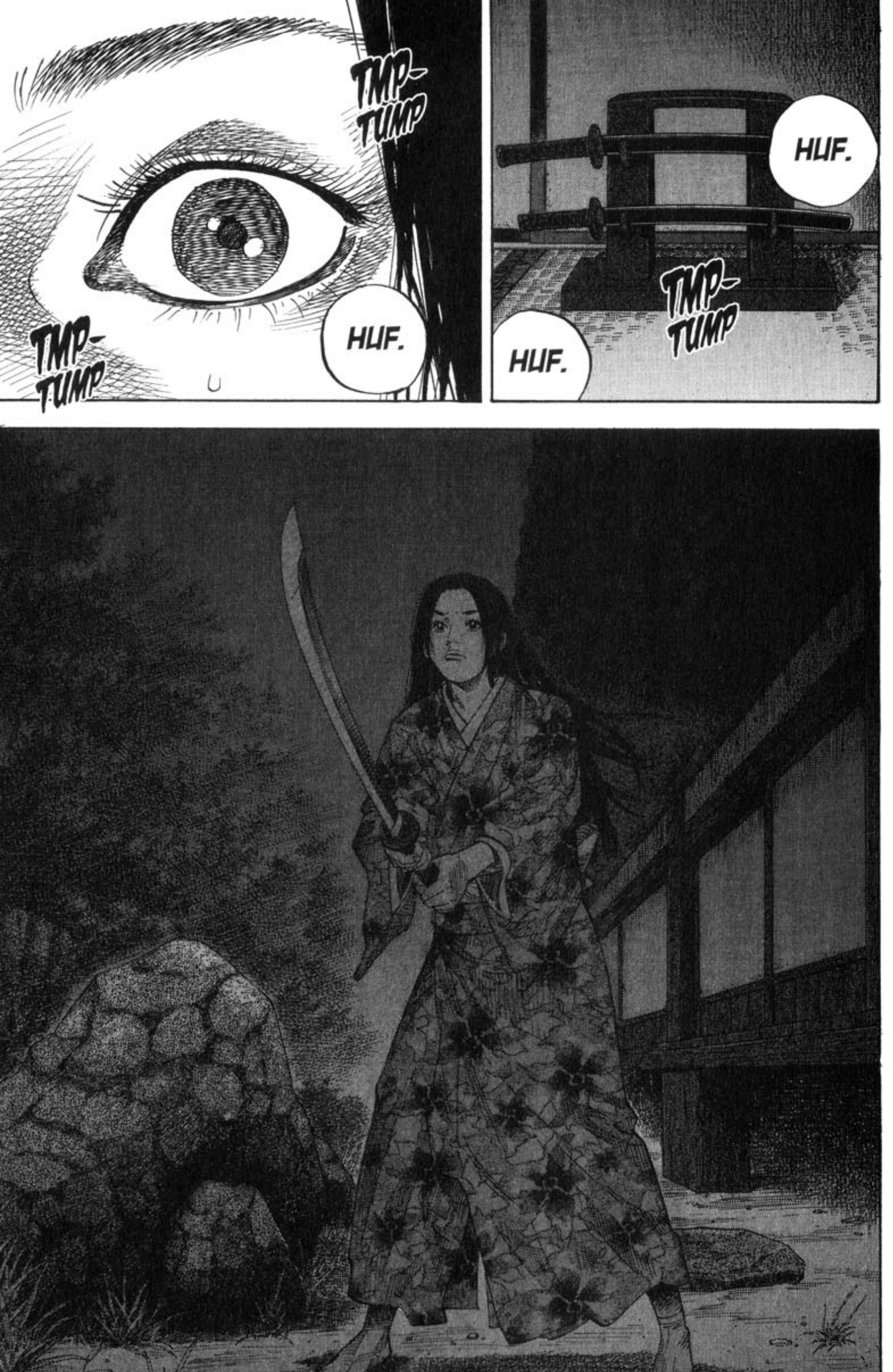

RUSTLE
TMP-TUMP
A RACCOON ...?
TMP-TUMP
OR MAYBE A FOX?
TMP-TUMP
TMP-TUMP
RUSTLE
KRAK

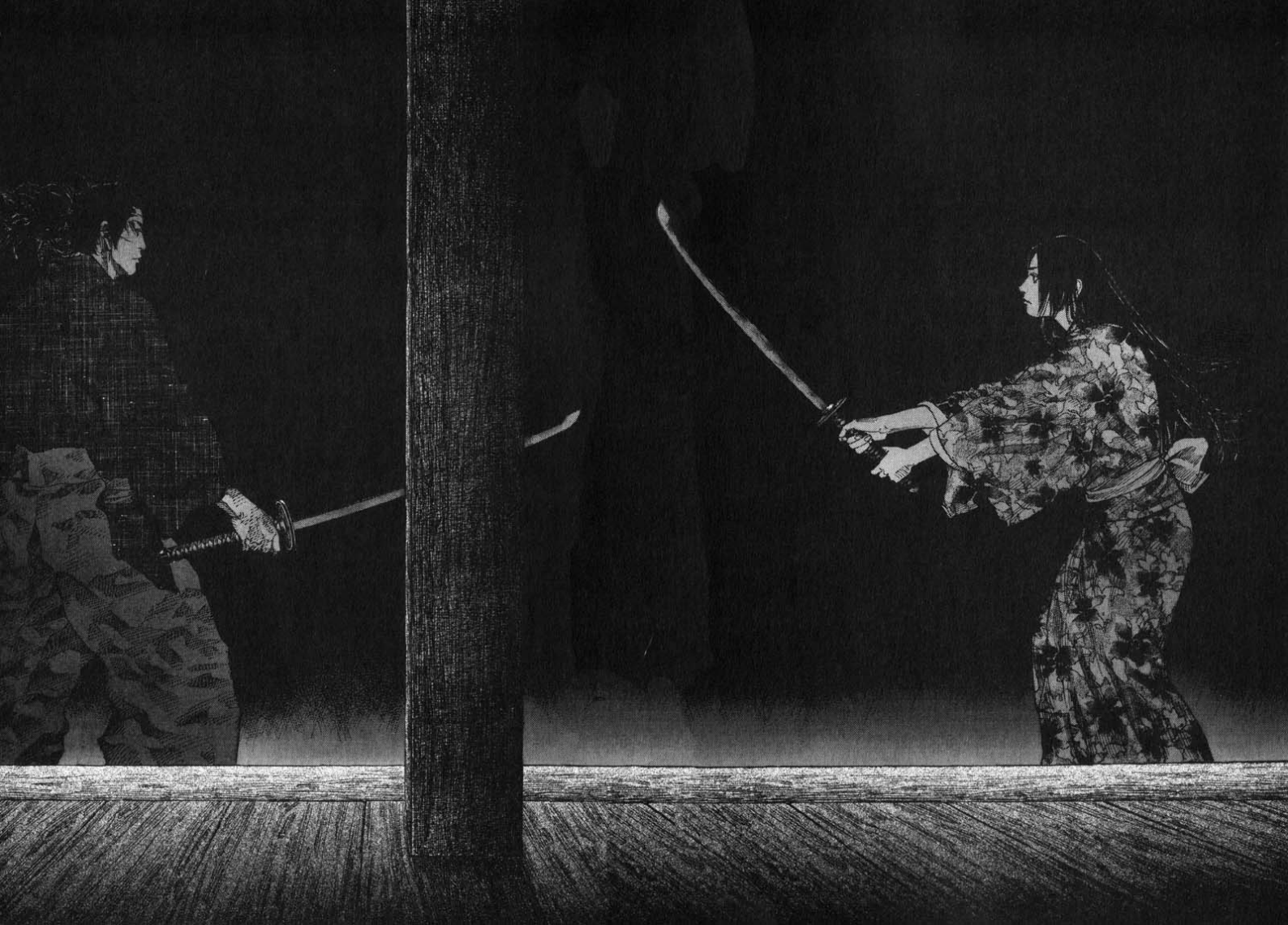

FSH

OH, NO! THE MASTER...
TMP-TUMP

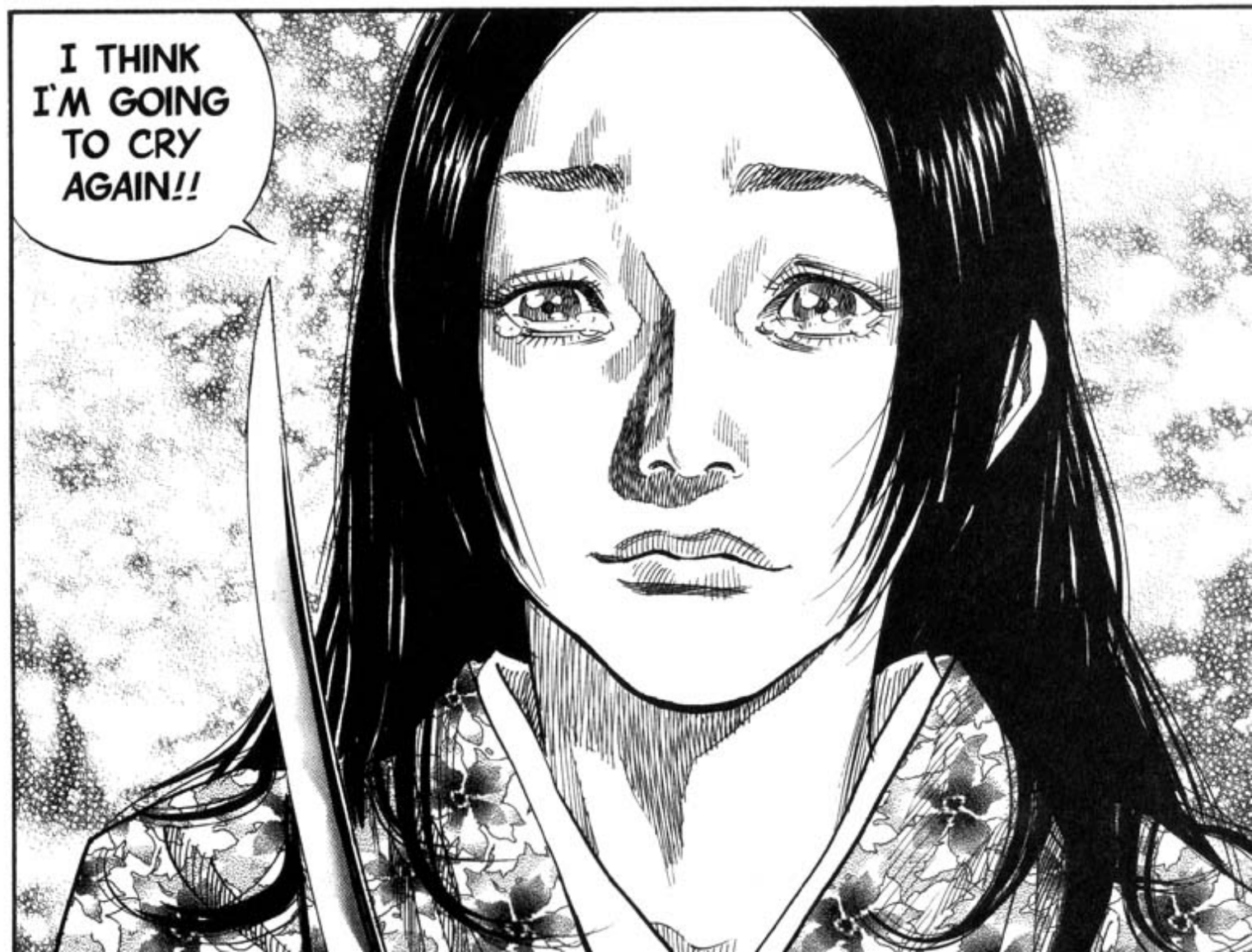

HUF.
TMP-TUMP
HUF.
TMP-TUMP
HUF.

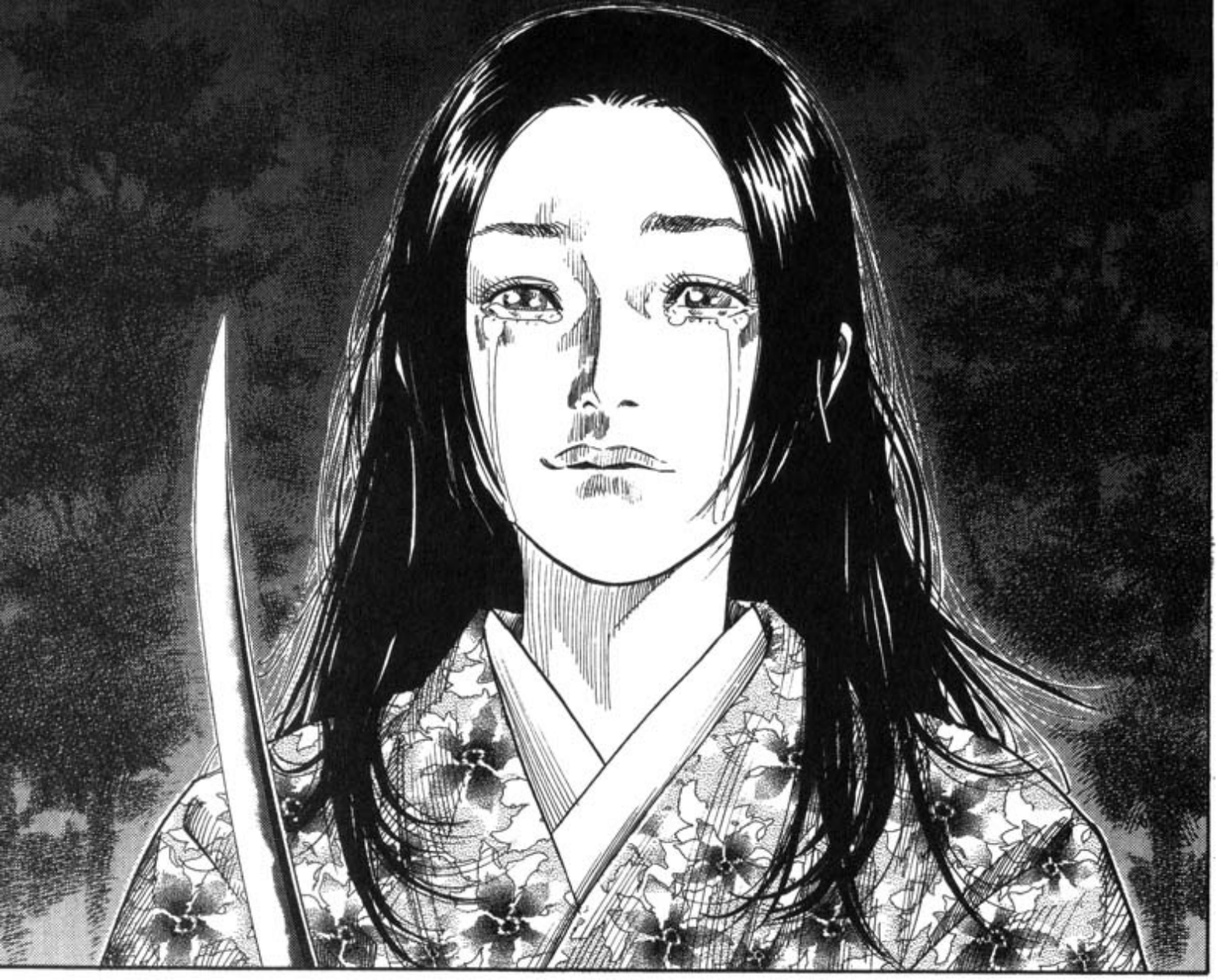
MASTER!!


TMP-
TUMP
HUF.
TMP-
TUMP
HUF.
TMP-
TUMP



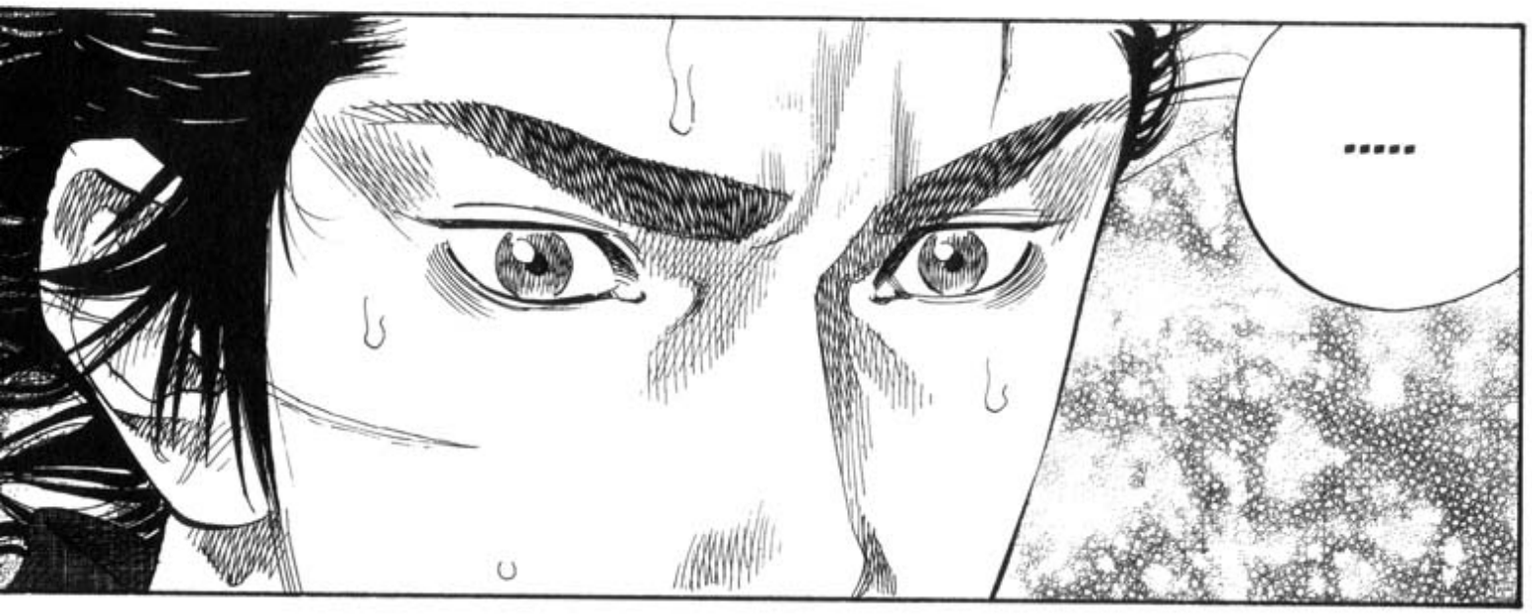
WHAT...
WHAT IS SHE DOING HERE...?


I THINK I'M GOING TO CRY AGAIN!!



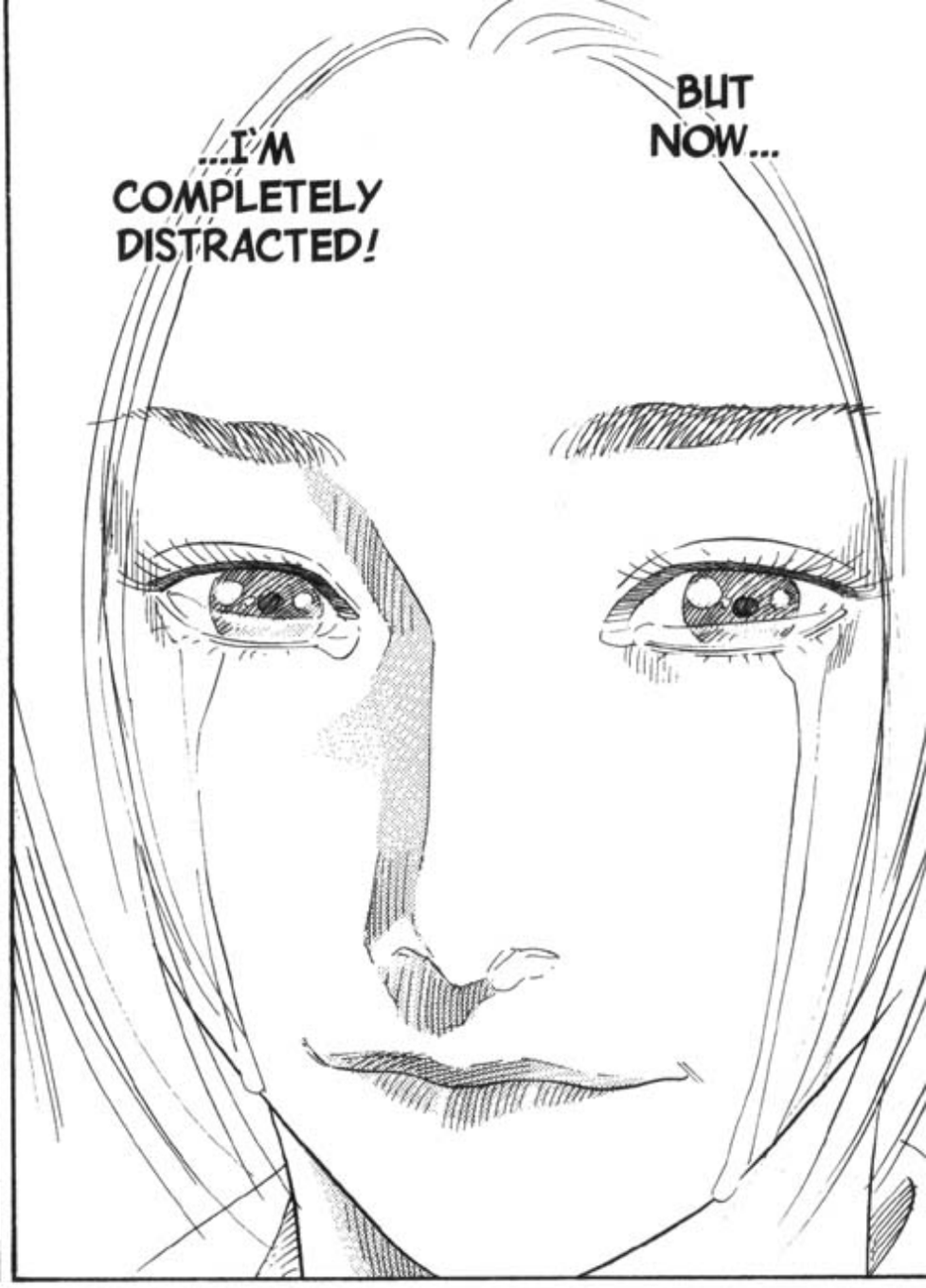
YOU'VE BECOME...
...SO BEAUTIFUL.
#97
Sliding Door
GASP!

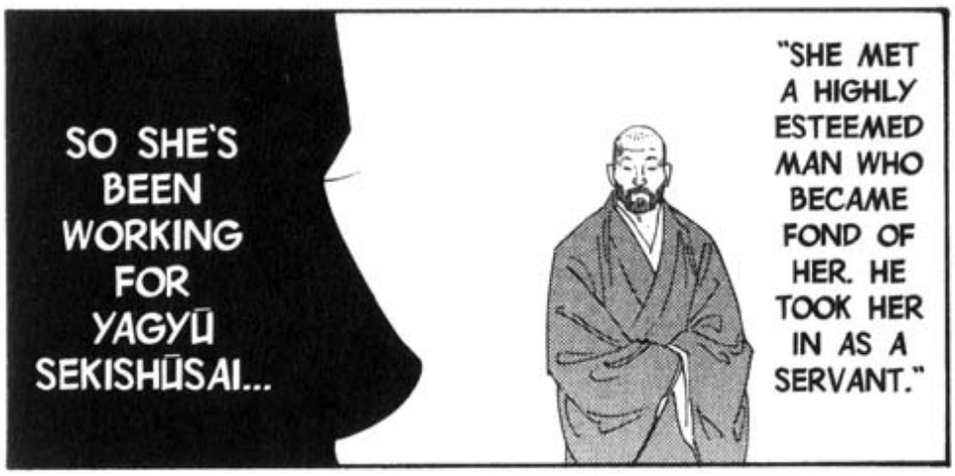
WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT, TAKEZŌ?
HAH...


.....

I WAS PREPARED TO PUT EVERYTHING ON THE LINE...
MY OPPORTUNITY TO CHALLENGE THE MOST RENOWNED SWORDSMAN THROUGHOUT ALL THE LANDS IS FINALLY AT HAND...

SHE'S SO BEAUTIFUL...


...I'M COMPLETELY DISTRACTED!
BUT NOW...


SO SHE'S BEEN WORKING FOR YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI...
"SHE MET A HIGHLY ESTEEMED MAN WHO BECAME FOND OF HER. HE TOOK HER IN AS A SERVANT."

...IN THE TIME WE'VE BEEN APART, SHE MATURED INTO A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN...

.....
!!
GET OUT OF THE WAY, OTSŪ.

A SINGLE SLIDING DOOR IS ALL THAT SEPARATES ME FROM YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI.
AND YET AS I AM ABOUT TO FACE THIS REPUTEDLY INVINCIBLE MAN, I FEEL...

MOVE...

.....

I FEEL PATHETIC AND JEALOUS!!

I CAN'T...

STEP ASIDE, OR I'LL CUT YOU DOWN!

HM...

WHY DID YOU HAVE TO BE HERE, OTSŪ?

I CAN'T MOVE. I'M PARALYZED WITH FEAR.
SHIVER
SHIVER
SHIVER

...!!

I THOUGHT A SABOTEUR HAD COME TO ASSASSINATE OUR LORD...
.....

YOU'VE NEVER EVEN HELD A SWORD...
HOW COULD YOU BE SO RECKLESS?
I HAD NO OTHER CHOICE...

HMPH.
YOU'D HAVE BEEN KILLED IF IT WEREN'T ME.

MY FEET ARE STUCK, TOO...
.....

FLIP
FLOP

.....

THE MASTER IS BEDRIDDEN. I *HAD* TO PROTECT HIM...
...!!
THEY'RE COMING ...
!!
BEDRIDDEN?!
HUF.
HUF.
HUF.

MASTER!!
I HOPE HE'S OKAY!!

IF HE WEREN'T ILL, NO ONE WOULD BE ABLE TO DEFEAT THE INVINCIBLE MASTER YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI...
BUT NOW HE'S SHAVED HIS HEAD TO RETIRE AND RENOUNCE THE WORLD.

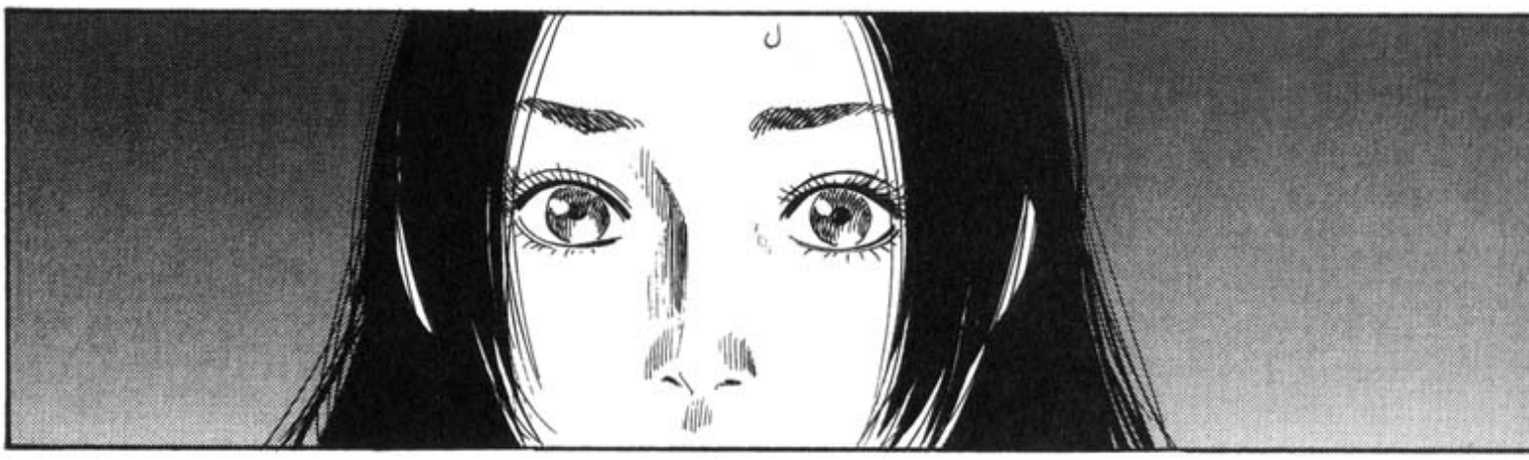
.....

RETIRE?

I GOT SO MAD I JUST GRABBED THE SWORD...
IT'S JUST COWARDLY TO COME AFTER A MAN LIKE THAT!

.....
WHY DID YOU--?
YOU COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN I WAS HERE...
TAKEZŌ ...
...!!
A SABOTEUR...
...!!
AS FAR AS THE YAGYŪ ARE CONCERNED, I'M NO DIFFERENT FROM A SABOTEUR...

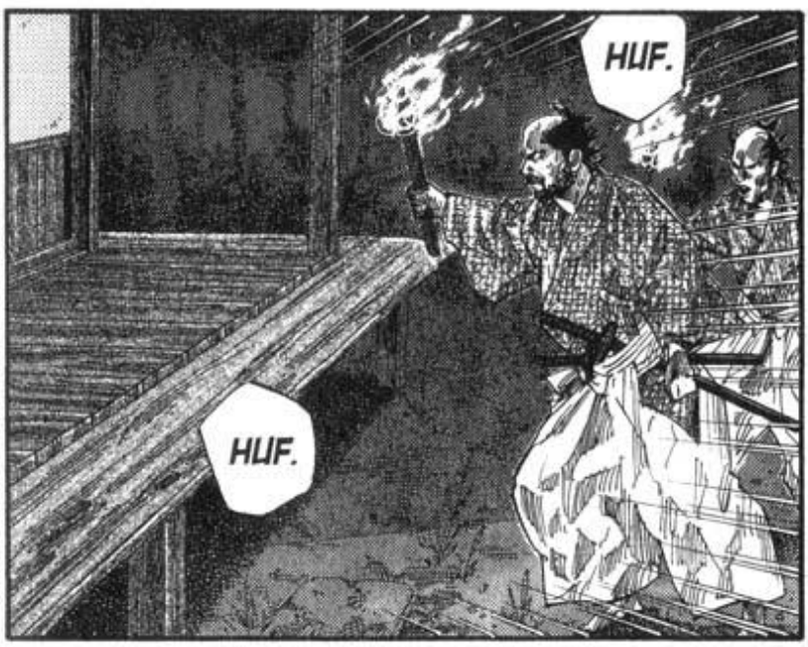
THE INVINCIBLE YAGYŪ SEKISHŪSAI...

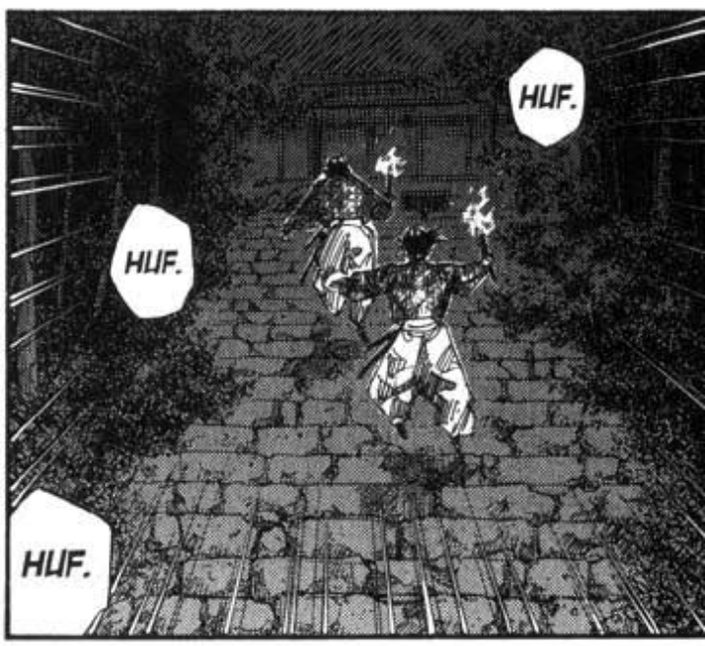


I'M NOT CONFIDENT THAT I CAN DEFEAT HIM WITHOUT KILLING HIM.

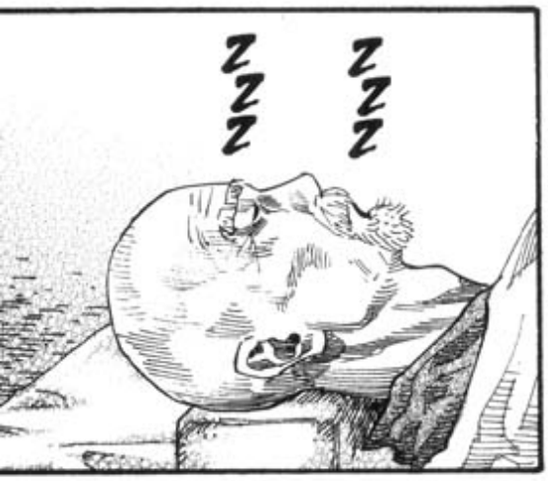
SMAK

YOU'RE ALL WET, TAKEZŌ...
THESE BELONG TO THE MASTER. CHANGE INTO THEM OR YOU'LL CATCH A COLD.


HUF.
HUF.


HUF.
HUF.
HUF.

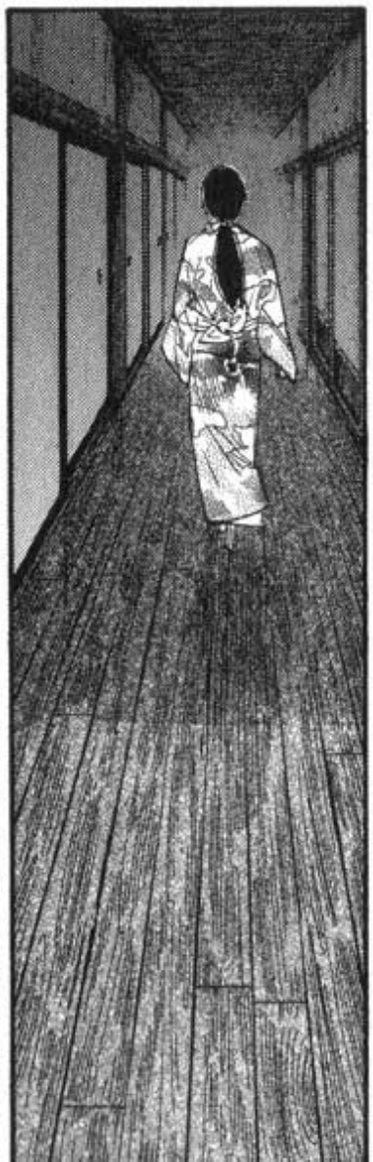
ZHOOP
MASTER!!
PLEASE EXCUSE THE INTRUSION!!


ZZZ
ZZZ

DID A YOUNG RŌNIN COME BY HERE?
.....
SEARCH THE PREMISES.
HE MUST BE HIDING AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE.
OTSŪ, YOU SHOULD BE INFORMED OF THE SITUATION...
YOU SEE...
WE FAILED TO REALIZE THIS MAN'S ULTERIOR MOTIVES...
BUT HE TURNED OUT TO BE DRIVEN BY RECKLESS AMBITIONS.
WE INVITED HIM HERE AS A GUEST...
A RŌNIN BY THE NAME OF MIYAMOTO MUSASHI IS COMING AFTER THE LORD.
BUT WE *SHALL* PROTECT THE MASTER AT ANY COST!!

I'M QUITE CERTAIN...
...MIYAMOTO MUSASHI IS NOT THE KIND OF MAN WHO WOULD ASSAULT A WOMAN.
I UNDERSTAND. I'LL RETREAT TO THE BACK ROOM...
THAT WOULD BE BEST.
REST ASSURED, YOU'RE IN NO DANGER.
IS HE STRONG?
SIR SHŌDA...
YES.
...!!

HE IS VERY STRONG.



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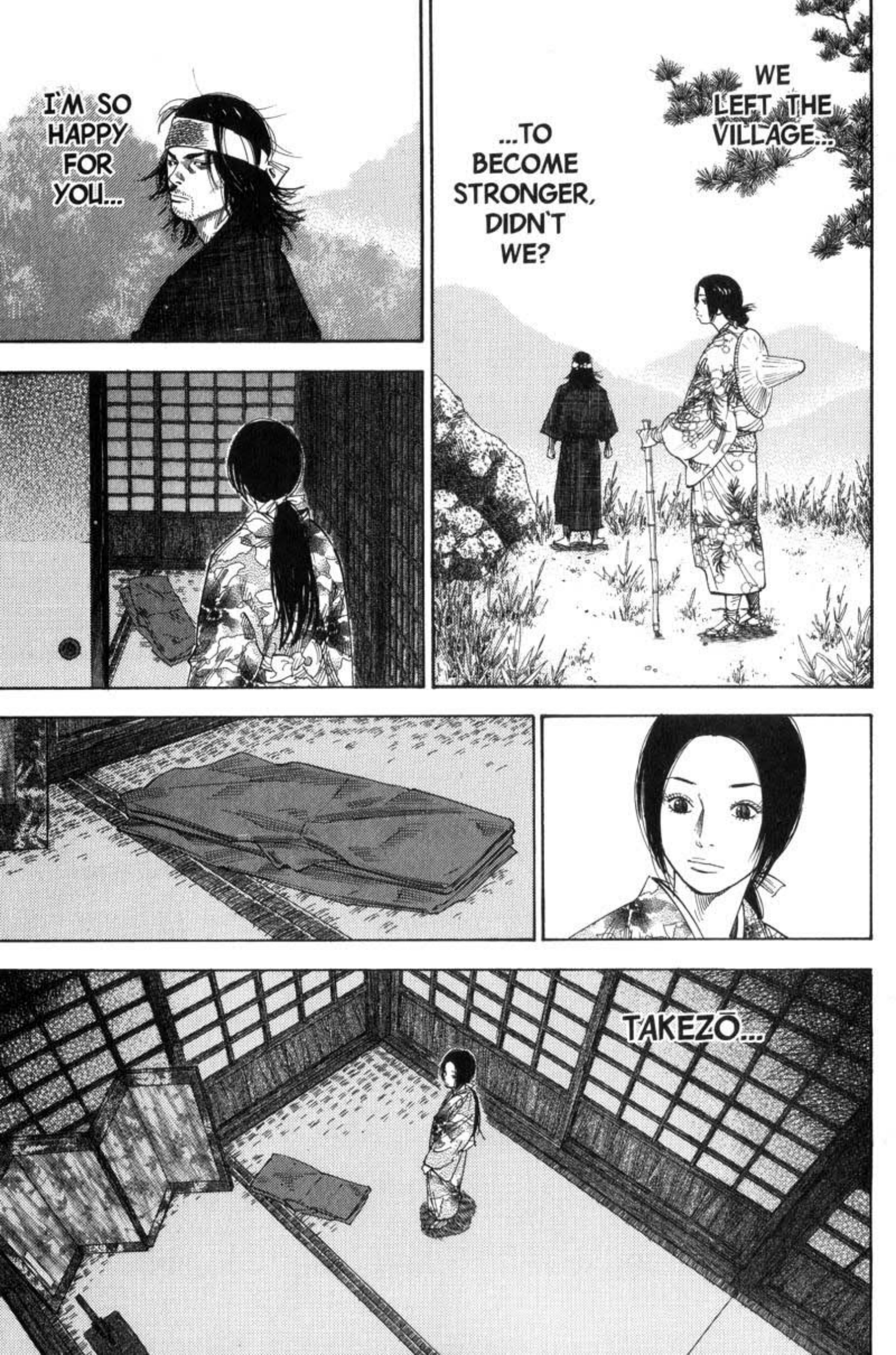
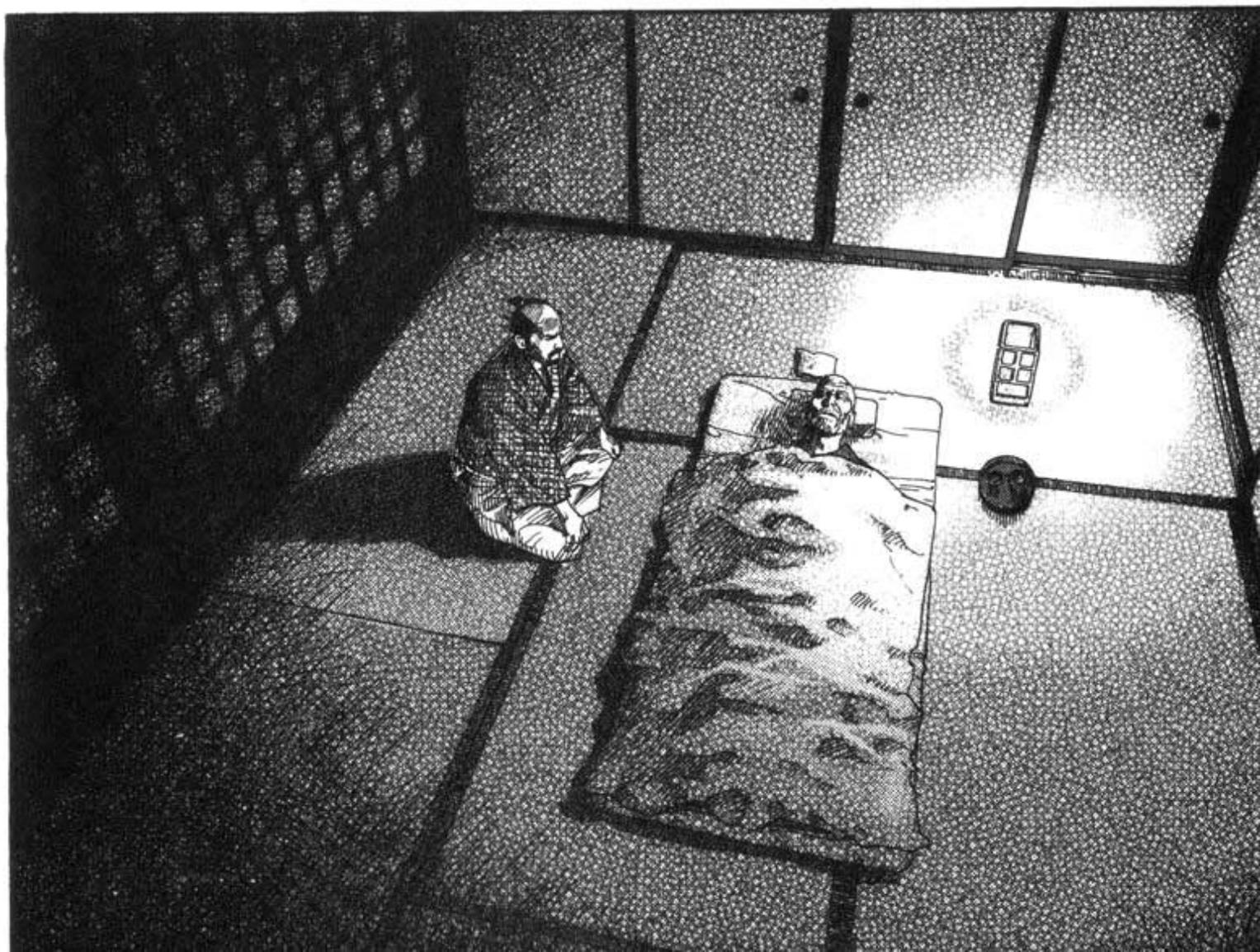

I'M SO HAPPY FOR YOU...
WE LEFT THE VILLAGE...
...TO BECOME STRONGER, DIDN'T WE?
TAKEZŌ...



About the Author

VAGABOND was created by Takehiko Inoue, author of the best selling manga *SLAM DUNK*, with over 100 million copies in print worldwide. For his work on *VAGABOND*, Inoue received the 2000 Media Arts award for Manga from the Japanese Ministry of Culture as well as the 2000 Kodansha Award for best manga. Most recently in 2002, Inoue's *VAGABOND* received the prestigious Tezuka award for best manga. To date, *VAGABOND* has sold over 22 million copies throughout the world. In addition to his numerous manga titles, Inoue also created the character designs for the PlayStation basketball game, *ONE ON ONE*.

About *VAGABOND* and Miyamoto Musashi

Takehiko Inoue's *VAGABOND*, based on Eiji Yoshikawa's novel *MUSASHI*, is a fictional account of the life of Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645). The historical figure Miyamoto Musashi, author of the philosophical strategy guide *A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS*, was a master of the sword and was revered as a "sword-saint." He founded the Niten Ichi style of sword fighting which is typified by fighting with both long and short swords at once, holding the long sword with the right hand and the short sword with the left. Musashi was also a master of the "gentler arts"—he was a master of *sumi-e* (black ink drawings), metalworking, and woodcarving. The films *THE SAMURAI TRILOGY*, directed by Hiroshi Inagaki and starring Toshiro Mifune, were also based on Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*. Inspired by the huge success of *VAGABOND* in Japan, in 2003, NHK produced the historical period drama *MUSASHI*. Also based on Yoshikawa's novel, this drama stars kabuki actor Shinnosuke Ichikawa as Musashi and TV star Ryoko Yonekura as Otsu.

A note on names:

The names presented within the context of this comic are presented in the traditional Japanese order—surname, followed by first name. "Miyamoto" is Miyamoto Musashi's last name and "Musashi" is his first name. The name of the creator of *VAGABOND*, however, has been presented first name first, last name second. "Takehiko" is the author's first name and "Inoue" is his last name.

Glossary and Extraneous Background Information

Hozoin Spear Technique
Created by the Buddhist monk Kakuzenbo Hoin In'ei (1521-1607) of Hozoin Temple which was a sub-temple of Kofukuji Temple in Nara. This spear technique is typified by quick dexterous movements rather than the use of brute force.

Kami'izumi Ise no Kami Hidetsuna (1508-1577(?))
The son of Kami'izumi Ise no Kami Hidetsugu, the lord of Kami'izumi Castle in present-day Gunma Prefecture. Hidetsuna founded the Shinkage-ryu Style of sword fighting and was such an accomplished swordsman and military strategist that he was once recruited by the famed Takeda Shingen. Hidetsuna, however, declined the post, stating that he preferred to travel throughout the land so that he might perfect his swordsmanship. Many notable figures studied under Hidetsuna including the esteemed Yagyu Munenori and Hozoin In'ei.

The Sengoku Period and the Battle of Sekigahara
The Warring States or *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) in Japan was a time of chaos and conflict. Central authorities, in the form of the imperial court and the shogunate, had grown increasingly weaker and the land was effectively ruled autonomously by numerous *daimyo* (domainal lords). Looking to expand their spheres of control, the *daimyo* were constantly at war with each other. One *daimyo* in particular, Oda Nobunaga, set out on a mission to unify Japan by means of conquest. Incredibly successful, by the time of his assassination in 1582, he managed to control approximately one-third of all of Japan. One of Nobunaga's chief generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, became Nobunaga's successor to carry on the quest for unification. Through a process of conquest and conciliation, Hideyoshi succeeded in creating an orderly federation amongst the *daimyo,* and by 1590, order was restored to Japan under Hideyoshi's rule. Hideyoshi's death in 1598, however, presented the question of succession. Most of the *daimyo* from the domains in the west remained loyal to the Toyotomi Clan and its five-year-old heir, Toyotomi Hideyori. Tokugawa Ieyasu, however, leading the major *daimyo* from central and eastern Japan, challenged the Toyotomi clan's leadership. The two sides clashed at the Battle of Sekigahara (1600) in Mino (located in present day Gifu Prefecture) where the Tokugawa claimed an overwhelming victory. From that point on, the Tokugawa clan would effectively rule Japan for the next 250 years.

Takuan Soho (1573-1645)
A monk of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, by the time Takuan was 37, he was appointed abbot of the leading temple of the Rinzai sect, Daitokuji. Takuan was an important figure whose acute and brutally honest advice was sought by influential and powerful figures such as Emperor Go Mizuno and the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. His correspondence to Yagyu Munenori discussing Zen and swordsmanship entitled *THE UNFETTERED MIND* has become an influential treatise in both the areas of philosophy and martial arts. The pickled daikon radish, *takuan*, also bears his name.

The Yagyu Clan
Yagyu Muneyoshi Sekishusai (1527-1606) was the founder of the famed Yagyu-Shinkage school of sword fighting. His son Yagyu Munenori (1571-1646) was one of Tokugawa's key generals at the Battle of Sekigahara. Munenori was appointed as the official fencing instructor of the Tokugawa Clan and in 1632 the Yagyu were appointed as the *ometsuke*–responsible for the surveillance of the *daimyo*. Although the Yagyu clan has been depicted in Kazuo Koike's *LONE WOLF AND CUB* as the plotters of the downfall of Itto Ogami, the general Japanese popular culture take on the Yagyu Clan is more positive. More specifically, Munenori's son, Yagyu Jubei (1607-1650), is viewed as a wandering hero protecting the people from evil-doers.

Yoshioka Kempo (dates unknown)
A distinguished warrior during the *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) and the founder of the renowned Yoshioka school of sword fighting. Yoshioka Kempo mastered the Kyohachi style of swordmanship and then modified it to form the Yoshioka style. In the context of Inoue's *VAGABOND* as well as in Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*, Yoshioka Seijuro and Denshichiro are Kempo's sons who are historically thought to have dueled with Miyamoto Musashi on numerous occasions.

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Vagabond

A master is responsible for his disciples' actions. When Jotaro commits a serious offense on the estate of the Yagyu Clan, Musashi must face the penalty for his young protégé's actions. Now Musashi is prepared to take out every man in the clan until he can face the great master of the house, Yagyu Sekishushi. Was this Musashi's plan all along?

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This book reads from right to left.

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